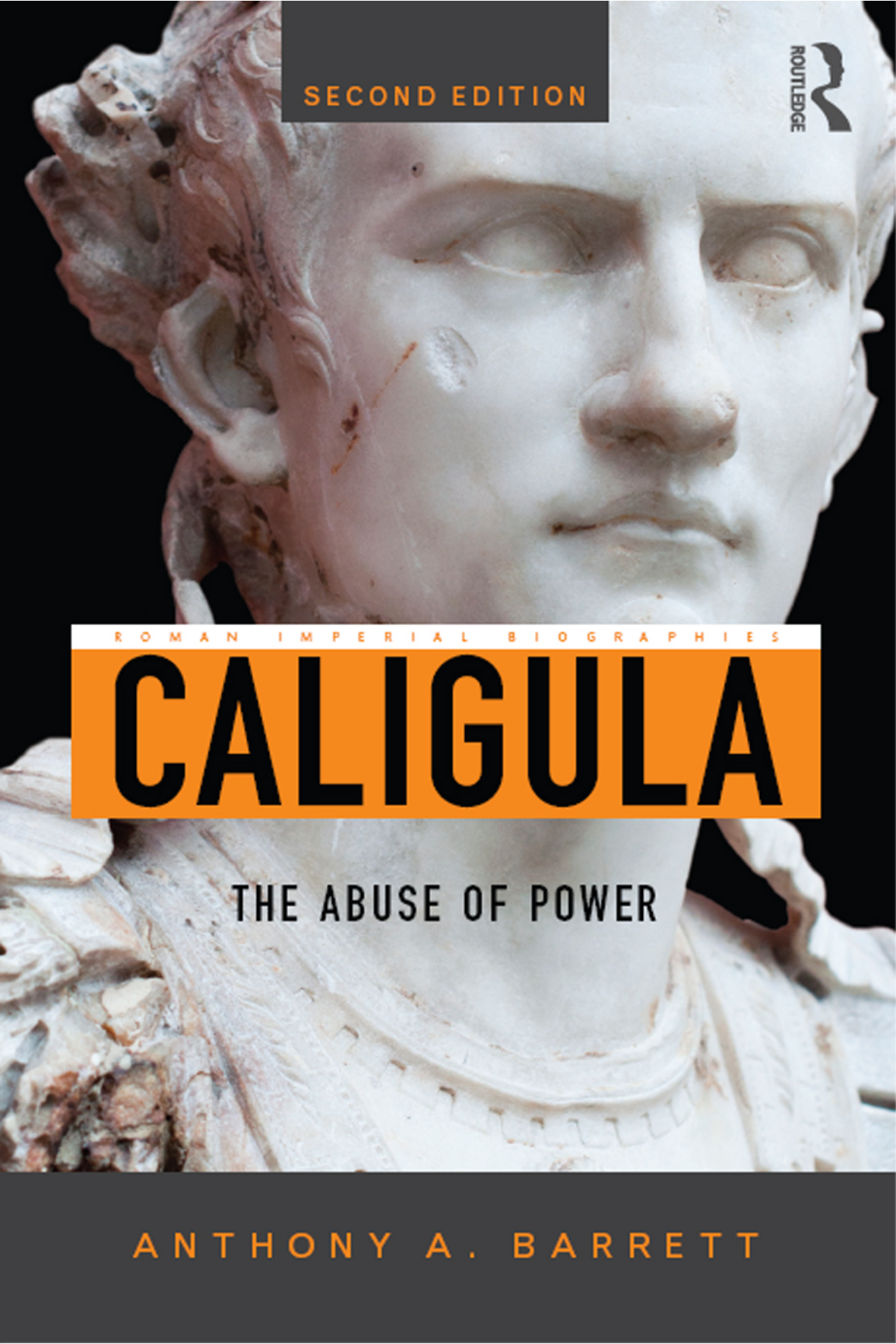


A close-up photograph of a marble bust of the Roman Emperor Caligula. The bust is shown from the chest up, facing slightly to the right. It has a serious expression and is wearing a laurel wreath. The marble is white with some visible weathering and staining, particularly on the left side of the face and the wreath.

SECOND EDITION

ROUTLEDGE

ROMAN IMPERIAL BIOGRAPHIES

CALIGULA

THE ABUSE OF POWER

ANTHONY A. BARRETT

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CALIGULA

The Roman Empire has always exercised a considerable fascination. Among its numerous colourful personalities, no emperor, with the possible exception of Nero, has attracted more popular attention than Caligula, who has a reputation, whether deserved or not, as the quintessential mad and dangerous ruler.

The first edition of this book established itself as the standard study of Caligula. It remains the only full length and detailed scholarly analysis in English of this emperor's reign, and has been translated into a number of languages. But the study of Classical antiquity is not a static phenomenon, and scholars are engaged in a persistent quest to upgrade our knowledge and thinking about the ancient past. In the thirty years since publication of the original *Caligula* there have been considerable scholarly advances in what we know about this emperor specifically, and also about the general period in which he functioned, while newly discovered inscriptions and major archaeological projects have necessitated a rethinking of many of our earlier conclusions about early imperial history. This new edition constitutes a major revision and, in places, a major rewriting, of the original text. Maintaining the reader-friendly structure and organisation of its predecessor, it embodies the latest discoveries and the latest thinking, seeking to make more lucid and comprehensible those aspects of the reign that are particularly daunting to the non-specialist. Like the original, this revised *Caligula* is intended to satisfy the requirements of the scholarly community while appealing to a broad and general readership.

Anthony A. Barrett is Professor Emeritus of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada, and Gastprofessor at the University of Heidelberg, Germany.

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CALIGULA

The Abuse of Power

Second edition

Anthony A. Barrett

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Photographs courtesy of Andreas Pangerl (www.romancoins.info)

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Photographs courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. (www.cngcoins.com)

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Photograph courtesy of Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 51, lot 853 (www.arsclassicacoins.com)

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In the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, drawn by Kornelia Roth

[Figure 3.1](#)

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund
Photo by Travis Fullerton ©Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

[Figure 3.3](#)

Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda

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Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen
Photos by Ole Haupt

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Getty Museum, Malibu

CREDITS

Figure 15.5

Worcester Art Museum (MA). Museum Purchase, 1914.23

Figure 15.6

Yale University Art Gallery. Funded by Peggy and Richard M. Danziger, LL.B. 1963, George Hopper Fitch, B.A. 1932, Allen Grover, B.A. 1922, the Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Class of 1913, Fund, the John Heinz III Charitable Trust, and the H. J. Heinz Family Fund.

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Marco Bonino

Figure 12.1

Peter Wiseman

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The new edition of an academic book offers the author an opportunity to update the text in light of the progress of scholarly research since the original publication. On that basis alone the case for updating *Caligula* is overwhelming. The original edition was published in 1989, and was followed almost immediately by no fewer than three commentaries in English on Suetonius' Life of Caligula, by Lindsay, Hurley and Wardle, all appearing within the space of two years and each in its own way making a valuable contribution to the field, and to these can be added the very useful Italian commentary by Guastella, appearing around the same time. The other main literary sources on Caligula have not received quite the same level of attention, but they have not been neglected. Wiseman's now classic commentary on Josephus' detailed account of Caligula's death, *Death of an Emperor*, appeared in 1991 (it has just re-appeared in a very recent new edition, as *The Death of Caligula*), and in the following year Edmondson brought out his excellent, but highly selective, commentary on Cassius Dio, including some of Dio's chapters devoted to Caligula. There has also been a steady flow of monographs. A year after my own book, Arther Ferrill's appeared, offering an interpretation radically different from mine, and there have been three scholarly studies in English since, by Adams, Wilkinson and Winterling (the latter originally in German, but since translated). One can add to this a large corpus of fresh journal articles, as well as important new archaeological investigations.

But this is not the only argument to be made in support of a new edition of this particular book. For authors to come face to face with their shortcomings is an inherently sobering experience. And revising *Caligula* has involved an extra shot of sobriety, since the text of the original edition suffered a disorder unique to its time. The manuscript of that edition was completed in the late 1980s, when word-processing was no longer exotic but still far from the norm. At that time the transfer of data from the author's private system to the publisher's totally different computer set-up was something of a hazardous adventure, with hit and miss results: my editor at the time was resigned to the fact that it usually saved time simply to have the whole text retyped from scratch. That was not the alternative I opted for, with the consequence that mysterious things happened to the text, most of which

were detected at the time, and corrected in a subsequent reprinting, but some of which were less obvious and have only just now become apparent to me after very close scrutiny. I need to add to this a number of shortcomings that cannot be blamed on technology. The first edition was written under considerable pressure to complete by a deadline to which I had freely, and naively, if not irresponsibly, agreed. As a consequence the original book too often manifests what now seems like badly argued theses, garbled references, sometimes inelegant, if not illiterate, phraseology. Hence this edition has involved much more than simply an updating in the light of new scholarship. The original version has been extensively revised. This is not to say that all the above faults have been eradicated, but there are certainly fewer of them. The same broad structure has been retained, since it seemed to work well enough, and some paragraphs have been retained more or less intact. But much of the text has been rewritten.

Apart from being given the chance to correct a number of *folies de jeunesse*, the revised edition also provided me the opportunity to revise my earlier general assessment of Caligula. But on this score I am arrogant enough to feel that less needs to be changed. I am still of the opinion that what I said then represents the reasonable conclusion to be drawn from an objective study of the sources. I have, admittedly, changed my subtitle from the *Corruption of Power* to the *Abuse of Power*. I am inclined now to view Caligula not so much as an individual corrupted by power but rather as an individual incapable from the outset of performing the task he took on. The emergence of cracks in his capacity for government arose, I feel now, not from a process of corruption, but from a basic temperamental inability to deal with circumstances when those circumstance were less than ideal. Difficulties were bound to arise, and in his case they arose within a few months of his accession. Anyone in any sort of managerial situation, whether it be the ruler of a country or the secretary of a local book club, needs to possess either some capacity for efficient administration, or a natural amiability that will disarm others into overlooking administrative deficiencies. The best administrators possess both; Caligula possessed neither. And he possessed neither from the outset.

Such an assessment of Caligula must to an unsatisfactory degree be personal and tentative. But that is true of almost everything that one can say about this particular emperor. I have become deeply and depressingly aware, over a quarter of a century on, that a true knowledge of almost any topic of Classical antiquity is something of a mare's nest; when that topic is a figure like Caligula, for whom the historical sources are particularly problematic, the mare can threaten to metamorphose into a species of uncanny and uncontrollable mythological beast.

No academic book can be written in isolation and I am pleased to reiterate the acknowledgements of help that I recorded in the first edition, and to add to them my more recent debts. Through discussion and correspondence I benefited greatly from the help of Ian Carradice, John Casey, Duncan Fishwick, Paul Gallivan, Brooks Levy, Roger Ling, Chris Simpson and Peter Wiseman. My colleagues in Vancouver, Jim Russell and Hector Williams, kept me up to date with archaeological developments. Henry Hurst has continued to keep me informed of

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

his thinking on his excavation in the Roman forum. Scholars in Germany helped me in tracking down relevant archaeological information from that part of the world, notably, Alexander Heising, Thomas Maurer and Christian Witschel.

On the technical side I was aided with the early word-processing problems by Olga Betts, and Margaret Milne drew the original maps. Tony Birley made available to me his map of the Roman World. Miriam Griffin kindly gave me permission to reproduce the Julio-Claudian family tree from her book on Nero; for this edition I have provided a simplified stemma. I benefited much from the lively input of students in Vancouver and more recently in Heidelberg, especially Sandra Bingham, Silvia Ferra, Lindsay Martin and Kathy Sherwood. My family, Doreen Barrett, Jacky Barrett McMillan and Sarah Barrett Jones read through proofs and drafts with good humour. For both editions I have enjoyed the generosity of a number of institutions, notably the library of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, the Bodleian and Sackler Libraries in Oxford, the Cambridge University Library, the Universitätsbibliothek, Heidelberg, as well as the Institute libraries there of the Seminar für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik and of the Seminar für Klassische Philologie. I have in addition enjoyed the generous hospitality of the Anglistisches Seminar.

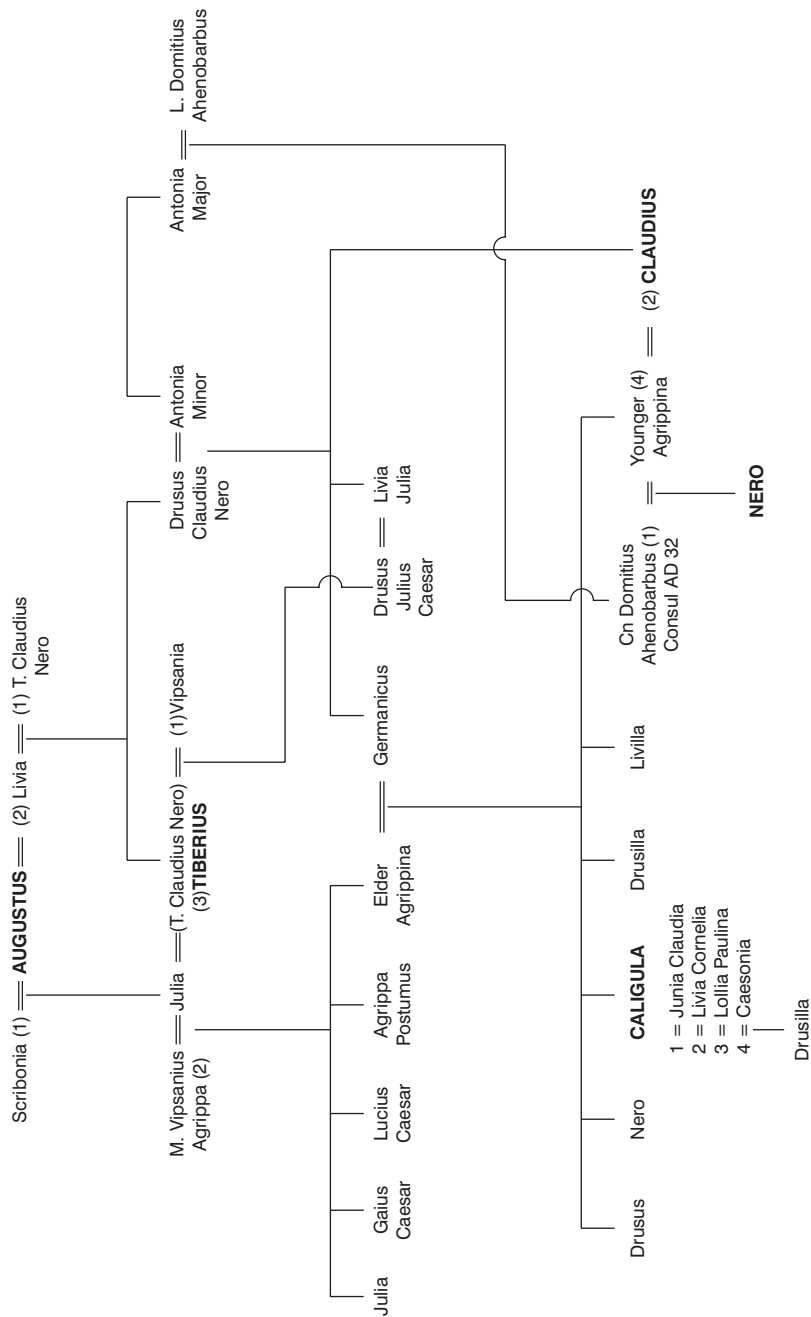
Marco Bonino and Peter Wiseman have kindly given me permission to replicate illustrations from their publications. Also, several institutions have made available images from their holdings, as recorded in the credits section.

For both editions I was dependent on the patient assistance of my editors, Peter Kemmis Betty of Batsford, where the project was first mooted over twenty-five years ago; Amy Davis-Poynter of Routledge, who raised with me the possibility of this revised edition and patiently guided me through to the completion of the manuscript; and Lola Harre of Routledge, who with equal patience prepared the completed manuscript for production.

Donna Hurley and Simon Malloch generously read through a draft of parts of the second edition and saved me from a number of errors – any shortcomings that remain are my own responsibility, of course, especially those that have crept in since their scrutiny.

I owe a special debt of gratitude, as do many, to the late Graham Webster, who first encouraged me to enter the field of imperial biography. He was an inspiring archaeological mentor and a good friend.

SIMPLIFIED FAMILY TREE OF THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS



OUTLINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Highly speculative dates are indicated by italics. The chronology of events relating to Alexandria and Judea in 39 and 40 is particularly uncertain.

12

August 31 Birth of Caligula

14

May 18 Caligula sent to Gaul/Germany by Augustus

August 19 Death of Augustus

17

May 26 Caligula attends Germanicus' triumph in Rome

After summer Caligula accompanies parents on eastern mission

18

Early in year Caligula delivers speech in Assos

19

October 10 Death of Germanicus

20

Early in year Caligula returns to Italy with his mother

27

Late in year Caligula moves to Livia's house on the Palatine

29

Before June Livia dies

Caligula moves to house of Antonia

31

Before October Death of Nero (brother)

After August 31 Caligula summoned to Capri

October 18 Sejanus falls

OUTLINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

32	Flaccus appointed Prefect of Egypt
33	Caligula made quaestor Caligula marries Junia Deaths of mother and Drusus (brother)
35	Tiberius names Caligula joint heir with Gemellus
36	Arrival of Herod Agrippa in Capri
37	
<i>Early in year</i>	Vitellius reaches a settlement with the Parthians
March 16	Death of Tiberius
March 18	Caligula hailed as Emperor by Senate
March 28	Caligula enters Rome
March 28 or 29	Caligula granted powers by senate
April	Caligula recovers remains of mother and Nero
April 21	Formal confirmation of Caligula's powers
May 1	Death of Antonia
July 1	Caligula enters first consulship (for two months)
August 30/31	Dedication of Temple of Augustus
September 21	Title of Pater Patriae granted by senate
<i>After September 21</i>	Caligula falls ill
<i>Late October</i>	Caligula recovers
<i>Near end of year</i>	Deaths of Gemellus and Marcus Silanus Caligula marries Livia/Cornelia
38	
In course of year	Abolition of sales tax Restoration of elections to people
Early in year	Death of Macro and wife
June 10	Death of Drusilla
August	Arrival of Herod Agrippa in Alexandria Disturbances in Alexandria
September 23	Consecration of Drusilla
Soon after	Caligula marries Lollia Paulina
October	Flaccus arrested and banished
October 21	Fire in the Aemilian district
39	
January 1	Caligula enters second consulship (30 days)
<i>early in year?</i>	Caligula denounces the senate Restoration of maiestas charge
<i>Spring?</i>	Marriage to Caesonia
<i>One month later</i>	Birth of Drusilla (daughter)

OUTLINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

<i>Summer</i>	Bridge at Baiae Imperial control of Legio III (Africa)
After September 3	Consuls removed from office
<i>Before October 27</i>	Prosecution of Sabinus, governor of Pannonia Execution of Lepidus Departure of Caligula for Mevania Gaetulicus exposed and executed Galba appointed to Upper Germany Agrippina and Livilla (sisters) banished Caligula departs for the North
After October 27	Further maiestas trials in Rome Caligula meets first senatorial deputation in Lyons
<i>Winter of 39/40</i>	Disturbances at Jamnia
40	
January 1	Caligula enters third consulship (12 days)
<i>Early in year</i>	Caligula joins Rhine armies
<i>Spring?</i>	Caligula visits the Channel
Early in year	Ptolemy summoned to Rome
<i>May</i>	Caligula receives second senatorial delegation
End of May	Caligula in vicinity of Rome First meeting with Alexandrian deputation
Summer	Caligula in Campania Petronius ordered to place statue in Temple at Jerusalem
<i>Summer</i>	Meeting with Herod Antipas Return of Herod Agrippa to Rome Ptolemy executed in Rome Rebellion in Mauretania
August 31	Entry into Rome, and ovation
<i>After August 31</i>	Second meeting with Alexandrian deputation Imposition of new taxes in Rome
<i>Late in year</i>	Execution of suspected conspirators
41	
January 1	Caligula enters fourth consulship (6 days)
Late January	Assassination during Ludi Palatini Accession of Claudius
43	
Late in year	Possible demonetisation of Caligula's coins

NAMED VICTIMS OF CALIGULA

Some of the dates are tentative.

37

Atanius Secundus, equestrian	humiliated?	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 14.2, 27.2; Dio 59.8.3
Publius Afranius Potitus, plebeian	executed or humiliated?	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 14.2, 27.2; Dio 59.8.3
Gemellus, adopted son	suicide	Philo <i>Leg.</i> 23; Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 23.3; Dio 59.8.1
Marcus Junius Silanus, distinguished senator, father-in-law	suicide	Philo <i>Leg.</i> 65; Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 23.3 Dio 59.8.4

38

Macro and Ennia, praetorian Prefect and wife	suicide	
Children of Macro and Ennia	executed?	Philo <i>Flacc.</i> 14

39

Suffect consul	suicide	Dio 59.20.3
Titius Rufus, probably senator	suicide	Dio 59.18.5
Junius Priscus	suicide	Dio 59.18.5
Carrinas Secundus	banished then suicide	Dio 59.20.6

NAMED VICTIMS OF CALIGULA

Calvisius Sabinus, legate of Pannonia	suicide	Dio 59.18.4
Cornelia, wife of Sabinus	suicide	Dio 59.18.4
Gaetulicus, legate of Upper Germany	executed	AFA xlix.6–8; Dio 59.22.5
Lepidus, friend of Caligula	executed	Sen. <i>Ep.</i> 4.7; Dio 59.22.6–7
Agrippina and Livilla	banished	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 29.2; Dio 59.22.8
Avillius Flaccus, Prefect of Egypt	banished then executed	Philo <i>Flacc.</i> 185–91
Anteius	banished then executed	Jos. <i>AJ</i> 19. 125
Tigellinus Ophonius friend of imperial family	banished	Dio 59.23.9
Lucilius Junior, friend of Seneca	tortured	Sen. <i>QN</i> 4 praef. 15
Julius Sacerdos wealthy Gallic notable	executed	Dio 59.22.4
40		
Sextus Papinius	executed	Sen. <i>Ira</i> 3.18.3; Dio 59.25.5b
Betilius Bassus, quaestor and his son Capito, procurator	executed	Sen. <i>Ira</i> 3.18.3; Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 26.3; Dio 59.25.6–8
Julius Canus, Stoic philosopher	executed	Sen. <i>Tranq.</i> 14.4–10
Rectus, friend of Canus	executed?	Plut. <i>Frag.</i> 211
Julius Graecinus, father of Agricola	executed	Sen. <i>Ben.</i> 2.21.5; Tac. <i>Ag.</i> 4.1
Quintilia, actress, friend of Pomponius	tortured	Jos. <i>AJ</i> 19.34; Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 16.4; Dio 59.26.4
Scribonius Proculus, senator	hacked to death	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 28; Dio 59.26.1–2

NAMED VICTIMS OF CALIGULA

Undated

Son of Pastor, distinguished knight	executed	Sen. <i>Ira</i> 2.33.3–7
Sextus Pompeius, relative of Caligula	starved to death	Sen. <i>Tranq.</i> 11.10
Aesius Proculus, son of Centurion	publicly executed	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 35.2
Columbus, gladiator	poisoned	Suet. <i>Cal.</i> 55.2

ABBREVIATIONS

Journals are referred to by their standard abbreviations, as used in *Année Philologique*. References to the works of ancient literary writers are based on those used in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

See also:

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i>
<i>AFA</i>	Scheid, J. (2008) <i>Recherches archéologiques à la Magliana: Commentarii fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt</i> , Rome: Ecole Française de Rome
<i>BGU</i>	<i>Berliner griechische Urkunden</i>
<i>BMC</i>	<i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i>
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
<i>EJ</i>	Ehrenberg, V. and A.H.M. Jones (eds) (1976) <i>Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus & Tiberius</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press
<i>FGrHist</i>	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>IGR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i>
<i>ILA</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie</i>
<i>ILM</i>	<i>Inscriptions latines de Maroc</i>
<i>ILS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae</i>
<i>Inscr. Ital.</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Italiae</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>
<i>PIR</i>	<i>Prosopographia Imperii Romani</i>
<i>P.Lond.</i>	<i>Greek Papyri in the British Museum</i>
<i>P.Oxy</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i>
<i>RIB</i>	<i>Roman Inscriptions in Britain</i>
<i>RPC</i>	<i>Roman Provincial Coinage</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
Smallwood	Smallwood, M. (1967) <i>Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius Claudius and Nero</i> , Cambridge, Cambridge University Press



Map 1 The Roman world in the lifetime of Caligula



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INTRODUCTION

The emperor Commodus allegedly fed a man to the beasts simply for reading Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*. This grim, yet oddly entertaining, anecdote is in all likelihood the product of someone's creative imagination. But, though fictitious, it does serve a valuable purpose, illustrating as it does the powerful impact that Caligula's malign reputation has had on later generations. It is, in fact, safe to say that, of all the emperors of ancient Rome, none, with the possible exception of Nero, surpasses Caligula's reputation for infamy, and Nero had fourteen years to hone his image, against Caligula's modest four. The quintessential mad despot, Caligula has inspired a stream of successful plays, films and television series. Yet while the public at large has always seemed to find him irresistible, until recently academic biographers tended to give him a wide berth. This is not altogether surprising. The loss of the relevant books of the most important ancient commentator on the early Roman Empire, the historian Tacitus, means that we have to rely for our information on markedly inferior sources, in particular the late historian Dio and the biographer Suetonius. Any possible bias on their part is not the main problem. Scattered references to Caligula made by Tacitus in the context of other emperors leave us in no doubt that his account must have been, if anything, more hostile than those that have survived, and it would almost certainly have been coloured by Tacitus' own special brand of bias. A far more serious difficulty is that much of the material recorded in the surviving sources is anecdotal and trivial, often in the form of the emperor's intentions rather than his actual deeds, and is at times presented with such little coherence that even a simple but reliable reconstruction of chronological events still largely eludes us. As a consequence, for a long time most surveys of Caligula's life tended, with some minor exceptions, to avoid critical analysis and to limit themselves essentially to paraphrased selections of Suetonius and Dio.

The biographical format imposes undeniable limitations on the serious study of any historical period, whether ancient or more recent, and it might well be asked why Caligula of all emperors should merit one. His reign was brief, less than four years, he has bequeathed to us no profound views on government,

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and he represents no important historical trend. There is, of course, a simple, straightforward, response. Whether perversely or not, people are fascinated by figures like Caligula, and this interest should be met by a study that seeks to take proper account of scholarly research and archaeological evidence. The result can, admittedly, be no more than an approximation of the actual events, more so than most political biographies, but it should, at least, be motivated by a sober attempt at academic truth.

The worthy objective of serving the general reader is not, however, the primary justification for this study of Caligula. It would be a serious mistake to dismiss his reign as devoid of historical significance. Several events with far-reaching consequences occurred during its course. Caligula formulated the plans for the conquest of Britain (or, more strictly, the southern part of the island), brought to pass by his successor, Claudius, just a few years later. His reign witnessed the first serious outbreak of violent anti-Jewish activity in the Roman world. Most importantly of all, he was arguably the first Roman emperor in the true sense of the word, handed by a complaisant senate almost unlimited powers over a vast section of the settled world. The manner of his accession established a pattern that was to be repeated throughout the next four centuries. Caligula teaches us the discouraging lesson that in practice history teaches us very little. The Roman senate soon came to regret that they had so enthusiastically handed over supreme power to a personable but totally inexperienced young man. Fewer than fifteen years later they went through almost the same ritual, and endured under Nero an extended reprise of what they had already suffered.

At its heart, a biography will have a simple objective, that of creating a verbal portrait of its subject. In the case of Caligula this is no easy task. To the ancient sources he was a destructive monster. The opportunistic philosopher Seneca, seeking to curry favour with Caligula's successor, Claudius, assured that emperor that Caligula had 'wasted and utterly destroyed the empire'. This is patently untrue. It seems clear that under Caligula the Roman provinces generally enjoyed stable and orderly government: the frontiers were secured, Rome reached a workable understanding with its old enemy Parthia, and German incursions into Gaul were stemmed. Within Italy, some individual senators did very well under Caligula, despite their desperate efforts to alter the record after his death. Even the most diehard critics of Caligula have to concede that there are aspects of his reign, as transmitted in the sources, which simply do not add up. He supposedly cut a ridiculous figure by engaging in battle alongside his troops. But Claudius was inspired to follow his example four years later when he notionally led his troops to victory in Britain. Caligula allegedly left Rome utterly bankrupt. But Claudius found the state of the treasury so healthy that he was able to abolish taxes and engage in expensive building projects. Caligula was reportedly a mass murderer. It is impossible to prove that he was not, and it is certainly the case that the repression that followed a series of plots against his life is presented with vivid gusto, creating

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the impression of a bloodbath. Yet the list of his *named* victims is not a long one, and many on that list do seem in fact to have become involved in plots against him, however justified they may have been in doing so. And the reaction of ordinary people to the death of this supposed bloody tyrant was not jubilation, but anger.

Caligula is not, of course, the only figure of the past to have been mauled by a hostile historical tradition. But his case is a special one, because of the unprecedented circumstances created by his death. His successor, Claudius, found himself in a very delicate, and complicated, situation when he became emperor. His elevation had come about as a result of his predecessor's murder. He would clearly have wanted to minimise the risk of setting a dangerous precedent, and it was very much in his interest to promote the notion that the reason why Caligula had been assassinated was not because the imperial system, a recent innovation for Romans, was inherently undesirable, but because the mentally incompetent Caligula was an unfortunate aberration. Claudius would have been aided and abetted in this by the senatorial collaborators, men who had done very well under Caligula and who afterwards would have been anxious to ensure that the historical record would show that, despite appearances, they had in reality lived in constant dread of extermination, surviving only by their wits and the lucky chance that Caligula died on the very eve of their planned destruction. This is not to suggest that there was a formal conspiracy afterwards to suppress the truth about him. But, at the very least, contemporary writers like Seneca and Philo would have been aware that any tendency on their part to depict Caligula as warped and depraved was not going to incur imperial disfavour. Hence one of history's great ironies. It was not enough to depict Caligula as the wilful incompetent that he so clearly was, as a ruler who irresponsibly exploited and abused his position for his own selfish ends. He had to be shown as mad, as someone incapable, because of his innate mental shortcomings, of behaving in a judicious or rational way. The weaknesses of an essentially monarchical system could thus be glossed over, and the calamities of the reign attributed to the exceptional vagaries of a demented individual.

The modern scholarly response to this situation has varied. Some, best exemplified by Ferrill's *Caligula: Emperor of Rome* (1991), essentially take the sources at their word, in what was once the traditional approach, the standard one in the nineteenth century, but none the worse for that. Most of the studies of the reign in the twentieth century and more recently since then, however, have endeavoured to correct the impression created by those sources, perhaps in the process going too far in the other direction. Willrich, whose conclusions were published in a series of articles in 1903, interpreted Caligula's behaviour as a deliberate and conscious effort to revert to the Caesarian concept of monarchy and a conscious decision to dismantle the artificial system evolved under Augustus, and made largely inoperative under Tiberius. Caligula, as Antony's descendant, was well suited for this role. His actions, in the view of Willrich, are rational and, in their own context, logical, the expression of a consistent political philosophy.

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Willrich's positive view was countered by the influential article fifteen years later in the *Realencyclopädie*, by Gelzer, who maintained that Caligula was a reckless and wilful ruler. Balsdon's (1934b) *The Emperor Gaius*, published some thirty years later, set out with a more modest thesis. To Balsdon, Caligula was intelligent, and consistent in his policies, if not always wise in his decisions, and the picture of him as a mad sadist is the result of distortion by the sources. There is much that is attractive in Balsdon's very readable study, but in his zeal to be fair to his subject, he is often far more charitable than the evidence properly allows. Two recent books in English are more well-balanced, although still more favourable towards Caligula than my own. Wilkinson (2005) attributes many of the problems of the reign to the shortcomings of the senate. Winterling, in a book published originally in German (2003), and now available in English (2011), like Willrich, sees in Caligula's actions a desire to dismantle the Augustan system, but argues that his behaviour is underpinned by a desire to expose the hypocrisy and artificiality of that system, rather than inspired by a sophisticated and positive political philosophy.

The primary aim of my own book is to attempt, as far as is feasible, a reconstruction of the events immediately preceding, during, and following Caligula's brief reign. The proper role of the historian, of course, is to look beyond the events themselves and to try to discern significant trends and the larger context. The scope for this very laudable objective is limited in the case of Caligula, since broad generalisations about the significance of his reign depend ultimately on reconstructions of events that are hypothetical. This is a constant and highly frustrating difficulty, one not likely to be ameliorated without the recovery of the lost books of Tacitus. In my own reconstruction of the events I have attempted to avoid excessive speculation, but some degree of speculation is unavoidable in a topic where the evidence is often ambiguous and contradictory. The resultant reconstruction is admittedly less a biography than a historical autopsy, where the corpse of the past is closely scrutinised for minute clues about what happened to it, and why it happened.

Many of the clues are unbelievable, sometimes, it seems, belonging to the realms of fantasy. The dilemma is that human beings are, on occasion, quite capable of behaviour that on the face is unbelievable, and even fantastic. Contemporary Roman leaders leave us in no doubt on this score. Determining when to accept, and when to reject, the testimony of the ancient sources is the central challenge facing the modern historian. Sometimes the decision is not difficult. Take, as an example, Suetonius' claim that Caligula denied that he was the grandson of Marcus Agrippa and supposedly insisted that his mother Agrippina, the daughter of Agrippa, had been born as a result of incest between Augustus and his daughter Julia. This seems hard to believe. But, of course, it is not impossible. Should we take Suetonius at his word? In this instance it would in fact be patently irresponsible to do so. Another literary source, Philo, contradicts Suetonius. More importantly, the numismatic and epigraphic record also contradicts him, and in the relatively copious coins and

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inscriptions of the Caligulan period Marcus Agrippa is regularly honoured (this is laid out in some detail in [Chapter 14](#)). What are we to make of all this? Suetonius is clearly misleading. But Suetonius (and the same can generally be said of Cassius Dio) does not seem to have been in the habit of fabricating information. His (and Dio's) failing, from the historian's viewpoint, is that he sometimes recycles material without careful scrutiny and without applying analytical judgement, and is consequently not shy about passing on anecdotes that now beggar belief. I would suggest that Suetonius is here reflecting a situation where Caligula made a frivolous or bantering comment, meant to impress by being clever, and that it has been taken out of context by a historical tradition that needed no encouragement to play up Caligula's perversity. When Oscar Wilde in his trial responded to the question of whether he had kissed the butler, by adding to his denial the flippant quip that the butler was 'peculiarly plain', he might have charmed his devotees with his wit, but he more or less ensured his own conviction. I would argue that a similar explanation may be found for many of the absurd activities and statements attributed to Caligula, from making his horse consul to having Jupiter as his neighbour. A hostile tradition, like the prosecution at Wilde's trial, has seized on his frivolous witticisms and handed them down to posterity as serious and deliberate statements of intent.

In the above example the situation is fairly clear-cut. Suetonius and Philo are seemingly at odds, but in Philo's corner we have a formidable array of numismatic and epigraphic evidence that pretty well settles the question in his favour. What if such primary evidence is not available? This can present a formidable task for which, as far as I am able to determine, no reliable scholarly tool has been devised. I am deeply aware throughout this study that there is an inherent circularity in many of the arguments. Source A will be used to undermine the reliability of source B, and that very same source B will later be called into service to undermine source A. That is not to say that there is no methodology at all. The 'autopsy' image is perhaps an especially appropriate one, since the approach adopted here is essentially forensic. That is, I have tried to examine each source on its merit and have made a judgement on its reliability. As a scholarly approach this leaves a great deal to be desired. It is, unfortunately, for all its shortcomings often the only option left open to us. In criminal courts we use such procedures to determine the fate, in some jurisdictions even the life, of an accused. It is to our credit that as historians we consider it a less than satisfactory procedure for determining the reliability of Suetonius or Cassius Dio. But it is often all we have.

There is, at the heart of the study of ancient history, a fundamental problem, one that we are highly reluctant to acknowledge. Often a piece of ancient testimony will be cast into serious doubt by the weight of other evidence, as in the case of Suetonius' comments about Marcus Agrippa. There are other occasions where the outcome will not be so clear-cut. When Caligula changed the command structure of the African legion, Dio tells us that the governor of the

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province was Lucius Calpurnius Piso. This information is perfectly acceptable, except for the awkward fact that Tacitus has a quite different candidate, Marcus Junius Silanus. There is a good case to be made for both, and it is one of those situations where a confident solution is unattainable. The scholar here can do little more than lay out the difficulties for the reader, and explain why a particular version has been accepted, if one has been. All of the above instances are generally identified as ‘problems’ in the source materials. But in a way they represent the least problematic types of ancient testimony. They demonstrate that when there is quality control, where a piece of ancient testimony can be put to the test, it is often shown to be inadequate, and we conclude that it is inadequate. The danger occurs *when there is no control* to test an item of information. When that information is not inherently silly or implausible, invariably we tend simply to accept it as a fact and present it accordingly. Are we justified in doing so? If Suetonius says that Caligula disowned Agrippa we do not take his comment at face value, because persuasive evidence points in the other direction. But when Suetonius makes the simple assertion that Caligula stayed with Livia as a boy, or when Dio says that Caligula wore triumphal dress in dedicating the Temple of Augustus, we present these eminently reasonable statements as *facts*, but we do so essentially because of the chance that no other authority has happened to make any comment on the same topics. Is Dio’s statement that Caligula wore the triumphal garb inherently more plausible than his claim that Lucius Calpurnius Piso was governor of Africa? Clearly not. Hence at a very fundamental level we have to acknowledge that vast swathes of ancient history are built on shaky foundations.

Moreover, even when the literary authorities provide information that seems sound or even persuasive, we must accept that what they are offering is not necessarily solid historical data but more often than not their own interpretations of events, or what may have started out in their sources as speculation but has, in the process of transition, been transformed from a reasoned reconstruction to a factual exposition; ‘hypothesis turns into factoid’ as Bruun has described the process in his 2010 article. Often it seems that the only way that the ancient writers could have obtained access to the information that they provide would have been by reading someone’s mind. A good example would be the wide range of theories about the plans for the succession that were supposedly floating about in Tiberius’ head in the years immediately prior to his death. And even when an authority claims to be passing on information from the emperor’s court, as Suetonius does in discussing Caligula’s intentions in building his bridge over the Bay of Naples, that information may itself ultimately be purely speculative, no more inherently historical than any of the others in the rich smorgasbord of explanations offered for this particular incident.

The conclusions reached in this book will inevitably not convince everyone, but they are, in my view, the conclusions that the sources, both material and literary, seem most reasonably to suggest. I would vigorously reject any assertion that this is a revisionist study, and it would be a serious misreading of its central

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thesis to see it as an attempt to 'rehabilitate' Caligula. I do argue that he has faced a hostile source tradition, but where the sources have misled us has been in portraying as insane someone who was in any case a villainous scoundrel. The literary sources may well have tarnished his true image, but that true image was scabrous and corroded well before the process of deliberate tarnishing began. We are entitled to expect more than just an absence of madness in our rulers, and rulers who behave despotically invite conspiracies, and those who plot against them are entitled to be viewed as heroes rather than criminals. Few who knew Caligula well seem to have regarded him highly, not even members of his own family. Estrangements within a family circle are not an uncommon phenomenon, of course, but when someone makes enemies of his sisters, and of his uncle and of his brother-in-law, in fact of all his close relatives, it is hard not to conclude that he was the one at fault. Caligula was admittedly popular with the masses, but the masses had little close contact with him, and no need to develop any kind of working relationship with him. In fact, they knew nothing about him, apart from his flamboyant showmanship. He was clearly an appalling ruler. Winterling may well be right that he sought to dismantle the hypocritical structure of the early imperial system of government. But the reality is that such hypocrisy, with its feigned deference and its insincere diplomacy, lies at the heart of effective government. There is by and large no real virtue in speaking one's mind in politics. As an individual Caligula was undoubtedly clever, but he was also insufferably arrogant and totally wrapped up in his own sense of importance. He also seems to have lacked any basic sense of moral responsibility. He was quite unsuited, either by temperament or training, to rule an empire, and probably any one of the 600 or so senators would have done no worse. Unlike Balsdon and Willrich, I see no fundamental consistency or coherence in his conduct, and little administrative talent beyond a willingness to appoint subordinates who served him ably, and, while he was alive, loyally. The traditional problem of Caligula's reign has been to explain why it descended into autocracy. In my view the great mystery is not why things went wrong, but how any intelligent Roman could possibly have imagined that they could have gone otherwise. To make an inexperienced and almost unknown young man, brought up under a series of aged and repressive guardians, master of the world, almost literally overnight, on the sole recommendation that his father was seen as a thoroughly decent fellow, was to court disaster in an irresponsible fashion and almost to guarantee an abuse of power. The Romans may have resented the subsequent burden of autocracy, but it was an autocracy largely of their own making.

The desire to meet the needs of a general, as well as a scholarly, readership, creates a number of unavoidable drawbacks. Some of the information provided will be elementary and superficial to the specialist. The first two chapters, in particular, although much shorter than in the first edition, contain basic information meant to provide a summary of events from the establishment of the imperial system by Augustus to the accession of Caligula. This

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background material is essential for the non-specialist but must summarise in brief paragraphs, and without extensive comment, issues that are often highly complex and highly controversial, at times with little direct reference to Caligula. Also, the occasional attempts to give flesh and blood to the host of personalities by means of single-sentence characterisations can hardly do them justice. Throughout the text there are several unavoidable inconsistencies. The Anglophone world cannot for the moment agree on how to make measurements, and the same is true of this book: imperial miles are used for casual large distances, metric is used for precise archaeological data. I have added AD or BC to dates where they seem needed to avoid confusion, and sometimes, admittedly, just because the style of the sentence seem to require them. Unfamiliar names both of peoples and places are generally given in their modern forms, less familiar in their Latin forms, the decision on which is which being totally arbitrary. Roman personal names can be baffling, even to the specialist. For the sake of clarity Roman *praenomina* (given names) are given in full forms, unless they are being quoted from coin legends or inscriptions. I have rendered uncommon names and formal expressions beginning with ‘Iu’ in their normal Latin forms, hence Catonius Iustus or the *Lex Iulia*, but inconsistently use the modern adaptations in such as the more familiar Julius Caesar or Junius Silanus. The Julio-Claudian family relationships are a mystery to all but the Julio-Claudian devotee and I constantly repeat the identifications of all but the most familiar ones. The technically incorrect, but generally familiar, name ‘Herod’ Agrippa is used of the colourful Jewish leader. The distinctive ‘Caligula’, rather than the formally correct ‘Gaius’, has been used deliberately, mainly on the grounds that in general, as opposed to academic, practice, that is how most of the world refers to him. Moreover, while the main literary sources regularly use ‘Gaius’, Seneca and Suetonius both refer to the nickname ‘Caligula’, and later sources, such as Ammianus, Aurelius Victor, Eutropius and Orosius, use it regularly.

I have at this point added material intended exclusively for the general reader. Because the literary sources lie at the heart of any study of Roman imperial history, some very brief background about the ancient authorities and the issues that they raise is essential. Moreover, the events of Caligula’s reign were shaped by earlier history, especially by the changes that his great-grandfather Augustus ushered in when he transformed Rome from a republican to an imperial state, and some acquaintance with the settlement he established is essential for an understanding of the Julio-Claudian period. The paragraphs that follow are the briefest possible introduction to the two subjects, and may safely be skipped by anyone claiming even a nodding acquaintance with Roman history and historiography.

The literary sources

At the heart of any historical study of any period is the range and quality of the sources available. Students of antiquity face a formidable challenge, in that the material will often be scarce, and what has survived will often be of dubious value. There is no attempt in this book to offer a detailed historiography of the literary sources for Caligula. As an intellectual discipline, historiography needs no defence. But to do the subject justice would require a substantial monograph in its own right, or a section of the book that would be so large that it would change its character. One might observe the scale of the introduction to Suetonius in Wardle's (1994) commentary on Suetonius' *Life of Caligula* (95 pages) or Louis' (2010, in French) on the *Life of Augustus* (72 pages) to appreciate the magnitude of the topic. Also, in the case of Caligula the relationship of the sources to one another presents a series of intractable and ultimately insoluble problems. At a very basic level we cannot be sure if Suetonius used Tacitus' *Annals*, or if Dio drew on Suetonius. We are on even shakier ground when we try to identify the lost contemporary sources that the tradition might have drawn upon. Several names have survived from the Julio-Claudian period, such as Cluvius Rufus, Fabius Rusticus, Servilius Nonianus and Aufidius Bassus, but the extent to which they were used by the extant sources for Caligula, or even whether their works covered the Caligulan period, are topics hotly debated by scholars, and little consensus has emerged. What is particularly striking is how little use was made of the writings of the members of the imperial family. Claudius wrote an autobiography, and Agrippina the Younger wrote memoirs, and they must surely have had interesting things to say about Caligula, but there is no evidence that their works were consulted for information about him.

Tacitus in the prefatory comments in the *Annals* famously commented that accounts of Julio-Claudian history were vitiated by flattery when their subjects were alive, and by hatred when they were dead. Any flattering commentaries on Caligula's reign have long disappeared, and the surviving literary tradition is almost uniformly hostile. The following thumbnail sketches provide only elementary information for those general readers to whom the major literary sources are no more than names. Professional scholars will read them at their own risk.

Seneca the Younger

There are two important surviving contemporary sources for Caligula's reign. Seneca the Younger (before AD 1–65) lived in Rome during its course and knew Caligula personally. He is not a historian in the formal sense, but indirectly provides information in his broadly philosophical works, making frequent references there to Caligula. Seneca could very well exemplify the treatment of Caligula that Claudius would have been happy to encourage. Many of the

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negative features of the emperor, such as his savagery and extravagance, have their first extant mention in Seneca, and they demonstrate how soon the hostile tradition became established, although whether Seneca was the direct source of information for later writers like Suetonius is an issue of scholarly debate. To a considerable degree Seneca's Caligula is a stereotype of the cruel tyrant. But there is a more serious problem. Seneca wrote most of his Caligulan references after the accession of Claudius, who, it has been suggested, might well have encouraged the depiction of Caligula as mad and depraved. Also, since Seneca was prone to currying favour with the current emperor by denigrating the achievements of his predecessors, his negative judgements on Caligula must be seen in that light. Moreover his portrait could have been vitiated by personal hostility, since Caligula mocked Seneca's literary style, and supposedly even considered putting him to death.

Philo of Alexandria

Another contemporary of Caligula was Philo (c. 30 BC–AD 45), a native of Alexandria, who headed the Jewish delegation to Rome near the end of his reign. There is much uncertainty about Philo's corpus of writings and how the extant works should be divided, but for practical purposes it is simplest to think of two works (in Greek) about the Caligulan period, the *In Flaccum*, and an untitled piece traditionally referred to as the *Legatio* (Embassy). In both of these works Philo is preoccupied with Jewish problems and addresses Roman history only to the extent that it touches on Jewish events, and his aim throughout is to show his own people in the best possible light. He is particularly anxious to convey to Claudius the notion that the Jews suffered unfairly under his predecessor, for which he blames Caligula and the Greeks of Alexandria. Philo announces at the end of the *Legatio* that he will now write his 'palinode' or recantation. That section is missing and Philo's meaning is much debated. He can hardly have intended to recant his criticisms of Caligula.

Pliny the Elder

The great encyclopaedia of Pliny the Elder (AD 23/24–79), the *Naturalis Historia*, published in thirty-seven books in 77, is a rich source of information on almost every aspect of the ancient world, including Caligula. The references are, of course, scattered throughout the work, so do not help in creating a coherent structure for the whole reign. The tone of most of the material is hostile, with emphasis on Caligula's cruelty and eccentricities. Pliny wrote other works, including a biography of Pomponius Secundus, who benefited from Caligula's amnesty at the beginning of his reign, an account of the German Wars (cited by Tacitus), with its focus on the campaigns of the elder Drusus, and the *Historiae*, which started at the point where the history of Aufidius Bassus ended (when that was much debated). These works would have been drawn upon by later

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authorities for information on Caligula. Suetonius cites Pliny on the question of where Caligula was born, but other precise borrowings are a matter of speculation.

Josephus

Another important, though in this case later, Jewish source is Josephus (born 37/8–c.100?), a pro-Roman Jewish nationalist. His *Jewish War*, an account of the great Jewish uprising against Rome in 68–70, with a lengthy introductory background, was written in Aramaic in the first instance, and he provided an extended Greek translation in 75–79. It mentions Caligula only incidentally. The *Jewish Antiquities*, which appeared in 93–94, seems to have been written in Greek from the outset, and covered the history of the Jews down to the outbreak of the rebellion. Josephus is a valuable source for events in Judea, and he also provides the most detailed account of any period of Caligula's reign to have survived – the lengthy narrative of the assassination. He devoted so much attention to the topic because Caligula's death served two important moral purposes – it saved the Jews from destruction and it demonstrated that retribution follows moral transgressions. Josephus' account of the assassination is so detailed that it is assumed that he used a Roman source, or sources (Cluvius Rufus is a favourite candidate). Unfortunately his version of events is muddled in places, a situation aggravated by the corrupt state of the manuscripts. Also, much of his information on Caligula in the *Antiquities* may derive from a largely fictitious *Life of Agrippa*, a highly romanticised account of Caligula's closest friend, Herod Agrippa, written some forty years after the king's death and perhaps with little claim to historical accuracy.

Tacitus

Conspicuous by his absence from the sources for most of Caligula's reign is the premier historian of the Julio-Claudian period, Cornelius Tacitus (mid-50s–after 118). His last work, the *Annals*, covered in detail the period from the accession of Tiberius in AD 14 to the death of Nero in 68. The loss of Books 7–10 (and the first part of Book 11) creates a gap from the death of Tiberius to approximately halfway through Claudius' reign. Thus while Tacitus provides details about Caligula's birth and youth, the narrative of the period when he was emperor is missing. This is a great loss. Tacitus is not free from bias against the imperial family, and his claim to write *sine ira et studio* ('without anger or bias') is not to be taken at face value. His contempt for Caligula as emperor is evident from the brief comments he makes in other historical contexts. But the loss of the relevant books makes it difficult to create a coherent picture of Caligula's reign, despite the relative abundance of other source material.

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Suetonius

There are two fundamental literary sources for the reign of Caligula. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (c. AD 70–after 128) belonged to the equestrian or middle rank of Roman society (see below) and held a number of imperial appointments under Trajan and Hadrian, including the directorship of the imperial archives. He was a prolific writer on a wide range of topics, his *Lives of the Caesars* being his most familiar work. In these biographies Suetonius shows little interest in major public or political issues, unless they throw light on the character of the emperor, but to a degree this is compensated for by his fascination with antiquarian institutions and procedures. A major drawback for the modern researcher is that Suetonius is a biographer rather than a historian, and apart from the family backgrounds and early years of his subjects that generally appear at the beginning of each *Life*, he presents his material thematically rather than chronologically, and seems to assume that the reader will already be familiar with the basic outline of events. Thus he is not of great assistance in organising the events of Caligula's reign in a coherent sequence, nor should he be faulted for this.

Whether Suetonius drew on Tacitus, or if the *Annals* were even available when Suetonius wrote the *Caligula*, is an issue hotly debated by scholars. Certainly, Suetonius is generally not infected with the powerful animosity that impels Tacitus. In the *Caligula* he is willing to devote fourteen chapters to what he classes as positive aspects of his subject (*Cal.* 8–21) and distinguishes them from the behaviour of the *monstrum*, which takes up the remaining forty chapters. Suetonius' principal weakness is not *ira et studium* but rather a willingness to give a ready ear to stories passed down by the tradition. He was capable of serious research and does at times make use of public records and archival sources, and on some topics, such as the issue of Caligula's birth, his version is superior to that of Tacitus. He can also be highly sceptical of his sources; in his account of Tiberius' sexual perversions he declares that it is difficult even to repeat the stories, let alone believe them. But he does go ahead and repeat them, and often seems incapable of resisting a colourful anecdote, preferring to leave it to the reader to exercise a final judgement. And in this he can be inconsistent. Thus, in the *Caligula*, preparations for the campaign in Germany in AD 39 are presented as absurd farce, while in the *Galba* they constitute impressive military training. He also has a tendency to take specific, discrete incidents and to characterise them as the generalised and repeated behaviour of his subjects.

Cassius Dio

Our second basic literary source is Cassius Dio (ca. AD 164–after 229), a senator from Nicaea in the province of Bithynia in Asia Minor. His history, written in Greek over twenty-two years (ten in collecting his material, twelve in writing

it out), seems to have covered the period from the early kings down to Severus Alexander (222–235). He shows little interest in deep analysis and essentially compiles facts with little attempt at broad synthesis and little proper analysis. Where Dio expresses an opinion it tends to be relevant only for the specific issue at hand, and he presents no coherent body of political theory. He rarely provides his literary sources (Augustus and Hadrian are the only two writers specifically cited as sources), although his passing references to figures such as Livy show that he must have consulted them; no sources are cited in the Caligula chapters. Like Suetonius, Dio generally makes little effort to discriminate between hostile and reliable material, or between the plausible and the absurd. He writes very much from his own senatorial viewpoint, and is thus likely to be very unsympathetic towards Caligula. His account of Caligula takes up Book 59 of his history. Unfortunately there is a gap after AD 39 and four pages of the manuscript from the end of Book 59 covering events down to his death are lost, and the continuous narrative resumes with Book 60 and the accession of Claudius. For most of the events of AD 40 and early 41 we have to depend on the epitomes (summaries) made by Xiphilinus in the eleventh century and by Zonaras in the early twelfth. The epitomators, especially Xiphilinus, have a tendency to select rather than summarise, so that some of the important sections are lost in their entirety, such as the incorporation of the provinces of Mauretania in AD 40, mentioned only in the Index.

The great value of Dio is that he is the only surviving source to treat the reign of Caligula annalistically, covering events in broad sequence under the years in which they occurred. It is not a rigid scheme, since in many ways Dio's narrative is very biographical, almost a hybrid of Suetonius and Tacitus, 'biostructured' as Pelling expresses it in his 1997 article. Possibly the most striking example is the Caligula section, where Dio at times handles issues thematically outside their chronological context. Thus Caligula's supposed moves towards self-deification are treated together under the year 40, but include events that seem clearly to belong to earlier parts of the reign. Also, he will sometimes lump together events at the end of the year in which they happened. It is perhaps because he is in a sense a biographer as well as an annalist that Dio is no more immune to gossip and distortion than is Suetonius. In fact, in contrast to Suetonius, who lists several worthy accomplishments of Caligula the princeps to offset somewhat his excesses as 'monster', Dio only reluctantly and grudgingly acknowledges the worthy achievements of Caligula and even condemns actions that Suetonius characterises as statesmanlike.

As often as not, Dio and Suetonius will offer different versions of the same event, so, if Dio made use of Suetonius' biography, that was obviously not the only source he consulted on specific topics. But at times their testimony is strikingly similar. Thus when Caligula entered his consulship in AD 40 without a colleague his critics claimed that he did this in order to be sole consul. Both Dio and Suetonius point out that the critics were wrong and explain that the problem was that the other consul-designate had died shortly before he was

to assume office. Their information clearly has a single origin. But there is no consensus on whether Dio took this information from Suetonius, or whether they used a common source (Momigliano suggests Cluvius Rufus).

The Augustan settlement

The second topic essential for the general reader is the system of government established by the settlement created by Octavian (thereafter Augustus), in AD 27.

The principal deliberative and legislative body remained the senate, consisting of some 600 former magistrates of the rank of quaestor or above who could meet a property qualification of 1,000,000 sesterii. Arguably the first stage leading to ultimate entry into the senate took place at around the age of fourteen, when the Roman boy underwent the formal ceremony of manhood, exchanging his purple edged toga (*toga praetexta*) for the plain white one, the 'toga of manhood' (*toga virilis*). If he aspired to a senatorial career (this option was not open to women), he might seek the quaestorship when he had reached at least his twenty-fifth year. Twenty quaestors were elected annually, concerned with a variety of duties, usually but not exclusively financial. The quaestorship might be followed by one of two offices. The position of aedile brought responsibility for certain aspects of municipal administration in Rome. The alternative, that of the tribune of the plebeians, had originally been intended for the protection of the plebeians. By the time of Augustus it was still reserved for that order, but the old distinction between plebeian and patrician had by then few practical implications. The tribune was now primarily concerned with minor legislative matters. Augustus, and later emperors, including Caligula, acquired two of their rights, without holding the actual office (this was one of the fictions that allowed the republic to function as a monarchy). Tribunician *sacrosanctitas* rendered an assault on the person of the emperor sacrilegious. More significantly, his tribunician *potestas* gave him a number of rights, including that of convening the senate and the assemblies, and of initiating or vetoing legislation. This special authority was an important symbol of the principate, and emperors dated their reigns from the point when they assumed tribunician power.

For the ambitious senator, the tribunate, as well as the aedileship, could be bypassed, and he could progress straight to the next office in the hierarchy, the first major one, the praetorship. Under Augustus, ten or twelve praetors were elected annually; the numbers changed in later reigns, under Tiberius it was sixteen, under Claudius eighteen. Praetors had responsibility for the administration of justice. On completion of their term, they could compete for one of the two consulships, the senior offices in the state. Strictly speaking, the consulship could be held only after the candidate had reached the age of forty-two, but family background could make it possible for an individual to seek the office much sooner, possibly by thirty-two, while members of the imperial family

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were able to achieve it even earlier. From 5 BC it became common practice for consuls to step down during the course of the year. Their replacements were known as 'suffect' consuls (*suffecti*). There was a certain prestige attached to holding one of the first two consulships of the year, which was officially identified by the first two consuls' names. The consul thus first appointed was known as *ordinarius*, the Latin term usually still employed in preference to the misleading 'ordinary'.

The magistrate's sphere of operation was defined as his *provincia*. By Caligula's time this term tended to be applied to Rome's external possessions. In the republic, praetors and consuls governed their provinces when their regular terms of office expired. They consequently exercised their power, their *imperium*, in the capacity of the offices previously held, as propraetors or proconsuls. In 27 BC, Augustus surrendered the territories under his control to the senate and people. They for their part granted him an enormous 'province' (its precise extent varied over time), made up basically of provinces in Gaul, Syria and Spain, for a term of ten years, with the option of renewal. In these 'imperial' provinces, usually where the Roman legions were stationed, the governors (*legati Augusti*) and the commanders of the legions (*legati legionis*) were appointed by the emperor. The remaining 'public' provinces (sometimes misleadingly called 'senatorial') were governed by senators appointed by lot (competence was maintained by a strict process of regulating who would be eligible to put his name forward). The most desirable of these public provinces were Africa and Asia. Africa, with one legion, was the most notable exception to the principle that public provinces did not house legionary troops. The command of the African legion would in fact be reorganised by Caligula.

Egypt became a Roman possession under Augustus. It, like some of the smaller districts, was governed by imperial appointees from the equestrian order, the *equites*, a social rank with a lower property qualification (400,000 sesterces), and which engaged openly in commercial business. A man could not be an equestrian and a senator simultaneously (different sets of offices were open to them), although he could move from one order to another, to reflect a change in his fortunes and ambitions. The governor of Egypt held the rank of Prefect, and most of the other prefectures were the prerogative of the equestrian class. The most significant were those of the *annona* (corn supply), of the *vigiles* (fire and police service) and, most importantly, of the praetorian guard, the elite unit of troops stationed in Rome itself, and initially elsewhere in Italy, enjoying special pay and privileges.

There was a limited number of senatorial prefectures, the most important being the ancient office of Prefect of the city (*praefectus urbi*), largely ritual by the end of the republic but given real functions by Augustus and responsible for maintaining order in Rome. It had originally been held by a senator of consular rank and this continued to be the case. This city Prefect was granted summary justice in dealing with minor criminal infractions and through time assumed responsibility for more serious cases. In the late empire the *praefectus urbi* became an individual of considerable importance.

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The system created by Augustus was still in force when Caligula became emperor and, despite his best efforts to undermine it, the system survived him. Arguably, because of the shared origin of the Roman and Byzantine empires, it endured in a sense for almost fifteen centuries, until 1453, when the Byzantines were finally defeated by the Ottoman Turks.

FAMILY

Pinpointing the long-term causes of historical events is always a hazardous enterprise, and it might even be argued, at a rarefied and abstract level, that the conditions that prepared the ground for the accession of Caligula in AD 37 had been in continuous evolution since the earliest days of Rome's founding, or even earlier. But few would dispute that a key event in that process, one signalling a more immediate prelude to his reign, was the Battle of Actium, in 31 BC. The victory of Caligula's great-grandfather Octavian over the combined forces of Mark Antony, also his great-grandfather, and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, left Octavian in effective control of the Roman world. Granted the title of Augustus in 27 BC, he proceeded to reshape the way that Rome and her territorial possessions were governed. It is common to refer to him as 'emperor' from that point on, but he aimed to project an image of a princeps, a first citizen in a reinvigorated republic, even though his initial bid for power was based on that most monarchical of claims, heredity. He was the designated heir and (posthumously) adopted son of Julius Caesar, who, in his lifetime, had been appointed perpetual dictator and had topped even that after death, by becoming a perpetual god. The system instituted by Augustus, briefly described earlier, in the Introduction, allowed him to remain the dominant force in Roman life until his death almost half a century later and offered, as compensation for the loss of political independence, an extended period of peace and stability. That system was still in force under Caligula, born two years before Augustus died, and, despite his appalling record, it survived him.

Later Roman history was very much the product of Augustus' political innovations. But his personal life was no less important in shaping future events. He became infatuated with Livia Drusilla, the wife of a former opponent, Tiberius Claudius, and, soon after her divorce, married her, in 38 BC, a few days after the birth of her second son Drusus. Livia was a Claudian by blood (her name, Livia, acquired through an adoption of one of her forebears into the Livian *gens*, is misleading). Augustus was a Julian, and it is by these two families that scholars identify the first ruling dynasty in Rome's imperial history, the Julio-Claudians.¹ Having no surviving sons of his own Augustus promoted the careers of Livia's two. Tiberius, the older, morose and cynical by nature, would eventually succeed

him. Drusus, the younger son, as genially affable as his brother was morose, was married, in about 16 BC, to Antonia, the much-respected and ostentatiously chaste daughter of Mark Antony and Augustus' beloved sister Octavia. Drusus and Antonia produced three children: Germanicus (born about 16 BC), handsome, charming and immensely popular, and the father of Caligula; Livilla (born 13 BC), whose one recorded moral lapse earned her the opprobrium of history and a horrible death; and Claudius (born 10 BC), who throughout childhood and youth was plagued by physical, and what were seen as mental, disorders, but was destined in middle age to become a largely successful emperor.² Through his paternal great-grandmother, the worthy Octavia, Caligula could claim one of his two blood-links to Augustus. But the more direct one came through his maternal grandmother, Julia. A woman with a mind of her own, and a strongly independent mind at that (she shocked her old-fashioned father by plucking out her grey hairs), along with a sharp and cutting tongue, and reputedly a healthy taste for promiscuous sex. She was the only surviving child of Augustus from his previous wife, and, in accordance with traditional Roman practice, became a pawn in the political schemes of her father. Married first to her cousin Marcellus, who died not long after, Julia was then passed on to the solid and stolid Marcus Agrippa, Augustus' comrade in arms and the architect of the victory at Actium, and did her wifely, and her filial, duty by bearing five children; significantly for the topic of Caligula, one of those children was his mother, the formidably ambitious Agrippina the Elder.

For Romans, family background was deemed a powerful element in an individual's character, and this belief could influence how those individuals would conduct themselves. Hence when Caligula succeeded as emperor he saw it as part of his imperial mission to defeat the hostile German tribes along the Rhine frontier, and carry these conquests further, to Britain. He inherited this vision from his grandfather Drusus, who in a series of brilliant campaigns between 12 and 9 BC carried Roman arms as far as the Elbe. There, we are told, Drusus was confronted by the spectre of a giant (and, conveniently, Latin speaking) Germania, who told him not to advance further, whereupon he fell from his horse and injured himself so seriously that he fell ill and died thirty days later.³ Drusus had been widely loved, and it was generally, though surely erroneously, believed, that he had been committed to the restoration of the republican system. He was honoured with the posthumous title of Germanicus. This he passed to his descendants, and also bequeathed to them the implications of the name: the northern frontier was for their family the destined field of honour, an arena where they would establish their place in military history.

Roman operations in Germany continued after Drusus' death, but suffered an enormous setback in AD 9 when three legions were famously destroyed at Kalkriese in the Teutoburg forest, and their commander Varus committed suicide. Livia's older son, Tiberius, who had similarly shown considerable talent as a military commander, rushed to Germany and established order there, before moving on to suppress a major rebellion in the Danube area. Eight legions were

established on the Rhine frontier, divided between the two command districts of Lower (the more northerly) and Upper Germany. Tiberius returned to Rome in AD 11, and was replaced in Germany by his nephew, Germanicus, whose personal affability was apparently not matched by an equal share of genuine talent, but whose popularity would outstrip even his father's.

Germanicus, the father of Caligula, was born on May 24, in either 16 or 15 BC.⁴ Little is known of his early life, before his adoption, in AD 4, by Tiberius. That adoption was one of a number of attempts by Augustus to solve what was possibly the most intractable problem of his principate, the issue of the succession, a problem complicated by Augustus' anomalous and very personal role within the Roman state. There was no theoretical mechanism by which his authority could be handed on to a successor. But of course Augustus had initially presented himself to the world as the son of the deified Caesar, and for all his revolutionary vision he was driven by the eternal human desire to pass on his power to someone of his own blood, which meant to someone within the Julian family. In 21 BC he took an important step in this process when his old comrade in arms Marcus Agrippa divorced his wife and married Augustus' daughter Julia. Wild at heart she may have been, but Julia played an appropriate and responsible role as a productive mother. Their two sons Gaius (born 20 BC) and Lucius (17 BC) were both adopted by Augustus, clearly with the intention that one of them would eventually succeed him. When Agrippa died in 12 BC, Livia's son, Tiberius, was called upon in the following year to fill the gap and marry Julia, as her third political husband. Forced to divorce his wife Vipsania, of whom he seems to have been genuinely fond, he would come to regret bitterly his union with the wayward and headstrong Julia, and may well have felt a considerable if secret relief when in 2 BC she was caught up in a notorious sexual scandal and banished permanently from Rome (she died in AD 14). By nature austere and sober (or, to his detractors, dour and taciturn), Tiberius was in his true element when on campaign, sharing the hardships of military life with his soldiers. He felt, probably correctly, that Augustus had little personal affection for him and that he was seen, at best, as the successor of last resort. For a time he withdrew himself from Rome into self-imposed exile on the island of Rhodes. The death of Lucius on his way to Spain, and of Gaius two years later on an eastern mission, transformed Tiberius' standing; he now stood at the head of the queue, and was finally adopted, on June 26, AD 4, as Augustus' son, and granted tribunician *potestas*, probably for a period of ten years, powerful indicators that he was, indeed, Augustus' choice as successor.

Tiberius' possible satisfaction on this occasion must have been tempered by having been obliged to adopt his nephew Germanicus, the son of his late brother Drusus, even though Tiberius had a natural son, similarly, and confusingly, also called Drusus. Germanicus is a key figure in the historical process that prepared the way for the accession of his son Caligula, and he merits attention. The attitude of the literary sources towards his character and personal qualities is one of flattering adulation. Suetonius, who devotes a large section of the *Life of Caligula* to him, claims that he surpassed his contemporaries both in physical

and moral qualities, and was a gifted man of letters into the bargain. Despite his supposed achievements he nonetheless remained modest and considerate, and was immensely popular, partly because it was felt that he had inherited his father's supposed republican leanings. The only negative quality that Suetonius can come up with is his skinny legs, which he built up by strenuous horse riding. Tacitus reports that some compared him to Alexander the Great, and observed that if he had lived to rule he would have outdone him in military achievements, just as he surpassed him in personal qualities.⁵ These impressions clearly represent a highly romanticised view of Caligula's father, one that was no doubt fostered by anti-Tiberian elements after Germanicus' early death. A careful inspection of his career exposes quite serious errors of judgement and even a degree of emotional instability.⁶ But reality would prove less important than image in moulding the prospects of his son Caligula for the principate.

In his compulsive determination to be succeeded from within his own line, Augustus required Germanicus, shortly after his adoption by Tiberius, to marry the emperor's granddaughter, Agrippina. Germanicus' wife would manifest the headstrong independence of her mother Julia, and suffered a not dissimilar fate. Tacitus is sympathetic to her, since in the end she became a victim of the imperial establishment, but his generally positive portrayal is peppered by expressions like 'excitable', 'arrogant', 'proud', 'fierce', 'obstinate', 'ambitious'. Tacitus' comments are echoed in other sources. Suetonius records that her grandfather, Augustus, who had fixed views on moderation and propriety in speech, cautioned Agrippina not to speak *moleste* ('offensively'). As Dio expressed it, she had ambitions to match her pedigree.⁷

Agrippina was fully aware that in Imperial Rome a woman could not hope to exercise power in her own right. But she could have found an ideal role model in Augustus' wife, Livia, who demonstrated the crucial role that the wife of the emperor could play if she ensured that her private conduct was beyond reproach. Like Livia, she would be fanatically devoted to advancing the careers of her offspring. She bore, in all, nine children to Germanicus, six of whom survived early childhood, and one of whom, Caligula, would become emperor, albeit after her own death. Caligula had two older brothers, Nero (born about AD 6 and not to be confused with the later emperor Nero), and Drusus (born about AD 7/8 and also not to be confused with his numerous namesakes). He had three sisters, all of whom will play an important role during his reign; the most famous was Agrippina the Younger (born AD 15), no less ambitious than her mother but far more skilled at advancing her ambitions, herself the mother of the emperor Nero. Agrippina and another sister, Livilla (born 17 or 18), would go on to intrigue against their brother two years after he became emperor. Caligula's favourite was Drusilla (born 16) whose untimely death in 38 would shatter him.⁸ The children of Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder thus included both a future emperor and a future mother of another emperor.

Germanicus first achieved military distinction while serving with Tiberius in suppressing the rebellion that broke out on the Danube in AD 6. In AD 11, two

years after the disaster in the Teutoburg forest, he served again under Tiberius, this time in Germany. No major successes are recorded, and he returned to Rome by no later than the autumn of AD 11, to celebrate a consulship in the following year.⁹ We know little of his activities as consul, except the detail that he reputedly slaughtered two hundred lions during the *Ludi Martiales*, games held on August 1, the anniversary of the date when Augustus dedicated the temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum Augusti.¹⁰

It was during the year of Germanicus' consulship, AD 12, that his son Gaius (Caligula) was born. The date of August 31 is well established; it is provided both by Suetonius and by the surviving official calendars, the *Fasti*, of two different towns.¹¹ The place of birth is not nearly so cut and dried. There was clearly a difference of opinion in antiquity, and the remarkable discussion of the question that appears in Suetonius' *Caligula* is one of the most thorough of its kind found in any ancient historical source, and one much admired by modern scholars.¹² Suetonius admits that there are conflicting views on the question, and then proceeds to give us a rare glimpse of an ancient authority taking issue with his peers and setting out his arguments in detail. Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus, the military commander in Upper Germany during the reigns of Tiberius and then, initially, of Caligula, as well as a poet and future victim of Caligula (see Chapter 6), wrote that the birthplace was Tibur (Tivoli), hence in Italy. Pliny the Elder, on the other hand, placed it in Germany, at a place called Ambitarvium (or Ambitarvius) among the tribe of the Treveri *supra confluentes*, where altars were pointed out to him (Pliny) with inscriptions honouring Agrippina's delivery (possibly during Pliny's military service in the area).¹³ Moreover, an anonymous epigram that circulated much later than the event claimed 'a baby in the camp, a son in the line, he was sure to be emperor, a very clear sign' (*castris natus, patriis nutritus in armis/iam designati principis omen erat*).¹⁴

Suetonius is not impressed by any of this. He dismisses Gaetulicus as a flattering liar, then proceeds to demolish Pliny's case. The inscription seen at Ambitarvium and taken by Pliny to refer to Caligula's birth could in fact refer to the birth of one of the daughters of Agrippina and Germanicus. Suetonius notes that the Latin word in the inscription for 'delivery', *puerperium*, could refer both to a girl or a boy. In Pliny's defence we might observe that it is far from certain that Pliny rested his case on the meaning of that word (and given his reputation as a great encyclopaedist he surely would have understood what it meant anyhow), rather than on what he was told by the locals. Suetonius goes on to note that historians (unspecified) of Augustus were in agreement that Germanicus did not return to Germany until the close of his consulship (in AD 12), by which time Caligula was already born. That argument strengthens the case against birth in Germany, but it is far from definitive, since Caligula could have been sent to Rome shortly after the birth. Suetonius provides his own candidate, Antium (Anzio), and states that he saw the birth recorded there *in actis*, presumably in the *Acta Diurna*, or gazetteer of important public events.¹⁵ Antium was a colony of some antiquity on the coast, south of Rome. It had long been a much-favoured resort of well-

to-do Romans, and was a particular favourite of the Julio-Claudians. Augustus liked to stay there, and it was the birthplace of the emperor Nero and in turn of Nero's daughter, Claudia Augusta. There are traces there of an imperial villa with terraces, known traditionally as the 'Villa Neroniana'. It underwent major construction by emperors from Augustus to Septimius Severus, and would be a good candidate for Caligula's birthplace.¹⁶

Suetonius should perhaps have closed his case at that point, but he cannot resist gilding the lily, and adds a further argument, that Caligula preferred Antium above any other place, and planned to move the seat of empire there. This last argument comes as something of an anti-climax, especially since the same story of the planned new seat of empire was told of Alexandria too (see [Chapter 14](#)); also, if Caligula was so devoted to Antium, there is not a single record of this favour; indeed we know of only one visit that he made there (apart from his first wedding, when the locale was presumably chosen by Tiberius) and that was towards the very end of his life. On his last voyage outside Rome, travelling in a five-banked galley from the picturesque island of Astura to nearby Antium, his ship was brought to a halt. Divers were sent down to investigate, and discovered a small fish, an echineis, attached to the rudder. Supposedly the echineis was not only able to swim against the tide and current but also to hold back vessels sailing with the current. The event portended his imminent death, probably that of the fish too, but its fate is not recorded.¹⁷ We cannot locate him in Antium on any other occasion. If the evidence for the town as his birthplace was so overwhelming, it may be wondered why Suetonius felt the need to defend it so vigorously, and it is hard to avoid the suspicion that his agenda might well have been in part that of scholars throughout the ages, to show off his superior learning. It is worth noting that both Tacitus and Seneca accept that Caligula was born among the legions and that Suetonius, one suspects deliberately, has drawn a veil of possibly contemptuous silence over their assertions.¹⁸

By the end of AD 12 Germanicus left to serve as governor of the 'Three Gauls' (Aquitania, Belgica and Lugdunensis), an office bringing with it overall authority over the eight legions in Upper and Lower Germany. Since his birth Caligula had probably lived mainly in Rome, possibly staying with Augustus in the imperial residence on the Palatine Hill (see [Chapter 11](#)). On May 18, AD 14, not quite two years old, the infant Caligula was sent from the city to join his mother in some unspecified location. Germanicus was at the time engaged on taking a census among the Gauls, and Agrippina, being pregnant, as she was almost constantly, had perhaps remained in some safe location like Oppidum Ubiorum (the future Cologne). At any rate, we know from the letter that Augustus wrote to her on May 18 to accompany Caligula, quoted by Suetonius, that Agrippina and Germanicus were certainly in different locations, wherever they were, since he expresses the hope that Agrippina will reach her husband in good health (perhaps a reference to her pregnancy rather than just an empty cliché). In his letter Augustus expresses concern about his great-grandson's well-being and tells Agrippina that he is sending the child in the company of a physician,

whom she is invited to retain. This does not mean that Caligula was in poor health, he would probably not have been sent on the long journey north if he was. It probably reflects excessive caution on the part of the now very elderly Augustus. On joining his mother in the frontier zone Caligula reputedly became the favourite of the troops, displaying a precocious self-importance, dressed in a little soldier's uniform and earning the nickname by which he is generally known, Caligula ('little boots'), from the *caliga*, or boot, worn by soldiers of the rank of centurion down. The idea for the costume probably came from his mother: one of the rumours fed later to Tiberius by her arch-enemy, the sinister praetorian Prefect Sejanus, was that Agrippina was responsible for parading her son in soldier's garb and that she had come up with the idea that he be called 'Caesar Caligula'. The name started to pall in later life, and, according to Seneca, he was offended to be called 'Caligula'.¹⁹ Hardened soldiers often have a tendency towards sentimentality, and Caligula's childish sport seems to have forged a close bond between him and the troops, which might help explain how the legend grew that he had been born in a legionary camp.

On August 19, AD 14, Augustus died while visiting Campania. He was succeeded by his adopted son, the fifty-five-year-old Tiberius. There was no precedent for an imperial succession. Augustus had named Tiberius as his heir to most of his estate. Of much more constitutional significance, he had previously granted him a proconsular *imperium* equal to his own, as well as a renewal of the tribunician power, first granted in AD 4, which gave Tiberius a legal basis to administer affairs. Tiberius' position was strengthened symbolically when the consuls swore an oath of loyalty and administered the same oath to the senate, and also, we are told, to the knights and people. The mechanism seems to have worked very smoothly.²⁰ There would be no such clear-cut procedure in place when Caligula succeeded Tiberius, nearly a quarter of a century later.

The senate's role in Tiberius' elevation is of particular interest to the modern scholar, because it offers a precedent for assessing what will happen in the case of Caligula. Tiberius was rigidly conservative in his adherence to perceived constitutional propriety, and greatly concerned to ensure that the ancient body should perform its proper legal duties in confirming his accession. Frustratingly, neither the procedure, nor even the chronology of events, comes through clearly in the literary sources. A crucial senate meeting was held on September 17, shortly after the funeral. Augustus was declared a god, and exceptional honours were voted for Livia. Apparently at that point the senators entreated Tiberius either to accept or to continue the principate (it is not clear which, since there is no specific report of the substance of their motion). Tiberius for his part expressed considerable reluctance, whether genuinely or hypocritically it is hard to say, claiming that the burden of rule was too great for a single person. The purpose of this exchange has been much discussed, but whatever Tiberius' motives, he in the end yielded.²¹ As will become apparent, Caligula would assume the principate under strikingly different circumstances and by an even more strikingly different mechanism.

Outside the enclosed atmosphere of Rome, Augustus' death had an unsettling effect on the northern legions, where harsh conditions of service and unfulfilled commitments had already created serious problems of morale. Drusus, the son of the new emperor, was despatched to Pannonia, where violent riots had flared up among the troops, and by a canny combination of diplomatic tact and firmness, aided by a timely lunar eclipse, he suppressed an incipient mutiny. The troubles on the Rhine, concentrated in Lower Germany, resulted from basically the same grievances as in Pannonia, but they are given a political colour in the ancient sources, who assert that the soldiers wanted Germanicus to take over, a claim of loyalty and commitment that is not easy to reconcile with his subsequent difficulties in getting them to take him seriously.²² News of Augustus' death reached Germanicus in Gaul. At first he busied himself administering the oath of allegiance to Tiberius among local tribes, but when the alarming reports of riots among the troops reached him he took off in haste for Lower Germany. Tacitus, who greatly admires Germanicus as an individual, and his admiration may well have been deserved, is less enthusiastic about his talents as a military commander, without being explicitly critical. Far more impressive conduct, in fact, was displayed by an unknown but spirited legionary, the youthful Cassius Chaerea, who helped to restore order by bravely cutting his way through a mob of mutineers.²³ Chaerea will return to the historical stage some years later as tribune in the praetorian guard, playing the lead role in the assassination of Caligula. By contrast, Germanicus seemed to lack the same forceful energy, and his efforts to win over the troops failed miserably. He was reduced to producing a forged letter from Tiberius offering bogus concessions, and to dipping into the funds he carried with him for official expenses. These timely bribes calmed things down, but only temporarily, and before long order broke down again. Even Germanicus' own officers criticised his weak leadership in dealing with the rebels.

The mutiny was brought to close through a set of quite bizarre circumstances. During the unrest Caligula was with his mother within the town of Oppidum Ubiorum (later Cologne). Agrippina was pregnant (she seems to have lost the child), and to ensure her and Caligula's safety Germanicus arranged to evacuate them and place them under the protection of the friendly Treveri. As the wretched procession moved out of their quarters, Agrippina clasped her son to her, comforted by the tearful wives of Germanicus' officials. The literary sources present the subsequent events differently. In Dio's account the soldiers (these would have been the men of Legions I and XX Valeria Victrix) seize Agrippina and the child. When they realise that she is pregnant, they relent, and release her, but hold on to Caligula. It was a foolish manoeuvre; in the end they recognise that they will achieve little by holding an infant hostage, and they release him too. This defuses the situation.²⁴ In Tacitus' narrative, echoed in Suetonius in a different context, the soldiers are ashamed by the idea that their commander's wife, a woman of 'outstanding virtue' and the granddaughter of Augustus, should be forced to take her little son, the mascot of the legions, and seek asylum among the 'despised' Treveri (there is no explanation for why the Treveri were regarded

with such contempt, but soldiers traditionally loathe everyone not members of their own tight fraternity). What finally did the trick, according to Suetonius, and got them at long last to lay down their weapons, was the sight of little Caligula. It has long been argued that these accounts are different because they are based from different sources. It is also suggested that the first, quite humiliating, version is the true one and that the second represents a pro-Germanicus version, perhaps later circulated by Agrippina, who could have managed the later spin on the whole episode. But there are many common elements in the narratives of Tacitus, Dio and Suetonius here, and their differences can also be explained by their differing literary needs and aims when drawing on common source material.²⁵ Whatever the truth, the development took the wind out of the mutineers' sails, and the resistance all but collapsed. At long last Germanicus took decisive action, although even now he went to great lengths to avoid incurring ill will, leaving it to the troops themselves to deal with the ringleaders, which they did with gruesome severity.²⁶

Perhaps in an effort to stifle any further mutinous impulse through vigorous military action, Germanicus launched a limited and successful action across the Rhine from the legionary base at Vetera (Xanten), prudently withdrawing when neighbouring tribes seemed poised to join the fray.²⁷ No doubt Tiberius hoped that he would be satisfied with this single action, even promising him a Triumph, the splendid military parade through Rome that followed a major victory in the field, an honour that on this occasion was clearly out of proportion to the modest military successes gained.²⁸ But Germanicus was not one to rest on his laurels. He clearly had visions of following in his father Drusus' footsteps, by advancing the Roman frontier east to the Elbe, and in AD 15 he launched a vigorous and extensive campaign. It started off well. He advanced north-east, eventually reaching the Teutoburg forest, where moving ceremonies were conducted in honour of the legionaries who had died under Varus. But he then made the mistake of penetrating too deeply into enemy territory, and almost fell into the same sort of trap. He extricated himself only with difficulty. In full retreat, the exhausted Romans poured over the Rhine bridge at Vetera. There they were greeted by Agrippina, almost certainly pregnant again, who met them with words of encouragement as they trudged over the river, and handed out clothing and bandages to those in need.²⁹ They discovered later that her real contribution had been much more than just providing a boost to morale. When the bad news from Germany had filtered through, probably much exaggerated, the fear of a German invasion caused panic and some wanted to destroy the bridge. It was saved only because Agrippina herself personally intervened.

More campaigns followed in AD 16. Once again they started well, but then ran into difficulties when a Roman fleet, after transporting troops down the Weser, was hit by a storm on the return journey. The survivors were scattered along the shoreline of the North Sea, some of them as far afield as Britain. Further incursions were made later in the year to rebuild morale and to discourage hostile tribes from exploiting the setback. As Tacitus describes the events of AD 16, the year supposedly ended with the Romans in a state of elation, and

with Germanicus convinced that with just one more season he could subdue the territory up to the Elbe.³⁰ Tiberius clearly thought otherwise. As an old soldier, he appreciated the seemingly infinite capacity of the Germans to regroup and return to the field as vigorous as ever. Germanicus, he realised, would have to be recalled. This need not mean that he was envious of his adopted son's achievements, as Tacitus suggests. From the outset a cautious strategist like Tiberius must surely have realised that Germanicus' policy was pretty well doomed to failure. The conquest of Germany would require a steady policy of 'pacification', with military settlements established in relative proximity to one another, and an extensive network of communications. This was the strategy that would later be put into effective use during the initial conquest of Britain, with considerable success. In Germany it would have necessitated an enormous investment of men and material, more than Tiberius was willing to countenance. To avoid any appearance of a slight, he adopted the pragmatic and fundamentally sensible posture that the war had been won, and that Germanicus had achieved a brilliant success. Tiberius wrote to him at the end of 16, suggesting that the best future course of action would be to wait until the Germans fell out amongst themselves, as they inevitably would. He also tactfully suggested that if there was any further glory to be won in Germany, then Germanicus' stepbrother, Drusus, should be given his chance at a share of it. There is no reason to think that Germanicus would have taken any serious offence at this suggestion. His public professions of loyalty towards Tiberius throughout his career had no doubt been made easier by the complete impartiality that the emperor seems to have maintained in his treatment of son and stepson, *cum... integrum inter duos iudicium tenuisset*, as Tacitus is obliged, perhaps reluctantly, to concede. The situation was helped by the apparently genuine friendship between the two stepbrothers, a friendship that echoes the earlier closeness between Tiberius and his brother Drusus. Tacitus describes Germanicus and the younger Drusus as having 'an exceptionally harmonious relationship' (*egregie concordēs*), and these close feelings would be cemented by Drusus' marriage to Germanicus' sister Livilla, although the marriage would prove to be a literally fatal error for Drusus.³¹ We should accordingly treat with great caution the claims once made by historians that two rival parties organised themselves around the two young men.³²

Germanicus' achievements were presented in appropriately inflated terms, and when he returned to Rome, probably at the end of AD 16, and almost certainly accompanied by the little Caligula, he could do so as a conquering hero. On May 26, AD 17, he celebrated a splendid Triumph for his German victories. There was a great procession of spoils and captives, with reconstructions of mountains, rivers and battles, and Tiberius, in an uncharacteristic display of liberality, distributed a cash largesse among the people. What moved the spectators most, however, was the noble impression made by the triumphator, Germanicus, who rode in a chariot with his five children, Caligula, his two brothers, Nero and Drusus, and his two sisters Agrippina and Drusilla.³³ Caligula was now almost five years old, at an age when we just start to form coherent memories of dramatic events. This

Triumph, with himself at the centre of an adoring populace, must have remained as one of Caligula's earliest and most vivid childhood impressions.

That same year, AD 17, Germanicus was entrusted with a new and important assignment, one probably much better suited to his particular talents than putting the lives of Roman troops at risk for little purpose. He was appointed by Tiberius to lead an important mission to the East. A number of serious problems had arisen there, in particular the threat of a clash with the kingdom of Parthia. Through much of her recent history Rome had found herself at constant loggerheads with this great power, located between the Euphrates and the Indus. The main area of contention was Armenia, a mountainous country east of the Euphrates, bordering on Parthia (the area west of the Euphrates was defined by the Romans as Armenia Minor). The Parthians had a long-standing claim on Armenia, which ran counter to Rome's desire to maintain the area as a protectorate and buffer zone. By AD 17 it was without a king, and both Rome and Parthia would be determined to have a ruler in place well disposed to them. Apart from this thorny issue, there were other problems in the area demanding attention. Cappadocia, the wild and rugged region of eastern Anatolia, was of considerable strategic importance, and had been ruled by Roman client kings. The last of these, Archelaus, was summoned to Rome by Tiberius and accused of treason. He was not convicted – there may not even have been a trial – but he died before he could return, perhaps in 17. The status of his former domain passed into a kind of limbo.³⁴ At about the same time, two other rulers in Asia Minor died, Antiochus III of Commagene, a mountainous kingdom bordering the south-east of Cappadocia, and Philopator II, who ruled the Amanus range in the coastal region of Cilicia.³⁵ Commagene posed particular problems, as a very large section of the nobility desired annexation by Rome while the general population remained loyal to the old dynasty, and both sides sent deputations to Rome. Tiberius recognised that Germanicus was the ideal person to deal with these problems; whatever his deficiencies as a military commander, he was a genuinely gifted diplomat. He set off on his mission in the autumn of AD 17, accompanied by his wife Agrippina and his son Caligula (the other children remained in Italy), along with a large retinue.³⁶

It is a dangerous procedure to identify episodes of ancient history in ancient works of art where the images and events lack any formal identification; there is, however, a broad recognition among modern scholars that Germanicus and his family (perhaps on the eve of his eastern mission) are depicted in one of finest gems to have survived from the Roman world, the Grand Camée de France, held now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Figure 1.1). On one interpretation of this scene the central figure is Tiberius, accompanied by his mother, Livia. The deified Augustus looks down from below. Tiberius faces Germanicus, and bestows his mission on him, while to the left of Germanicus stand Agrippina and in front of her little Caligula, wearing a small cuirass. He also holds a tiny shield on his left arm, a smaller version of the one held by his father, and raises his right arm in imitation of the very same gesture that his father performs with his own right arm.



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Figure 1.1 Caligula, on the Grand Camée de France (in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, drawing by Kornelia Roth)

This scene could very well constitute the earliest reasonably identifiable portrait that we have of Caligula, who would have been five years old at the time.³⁷

Germanicus' journey resembled a splendid triumphal procession, as cities on the route competed to outdo each other in the lavishness of their welcome. He first visited his stepbrother Drusus in Dalmatia, then proceeded to Greece, to Nicopolis, the city founded by Augustus near the Battle of Actium. He spent several days there, visiting the bay where the famous naval battle had taken place. He was in Nicopolis when he entered his second consulship, in AD 18.³⁸ He then went on to Athens where he displayed his superb diplomatic skills. He dressed in Greek clothes and sandals and lavished compliments on the citizens, who in turn heaped honours upon him. From Athens he sailed to Euboea, then to Lesbos, where Agrippina gave birth to the last of her children, Julia Livilla. Agrippina probably stayed on in Lesbos when Germanicus, accompanied by his son Caligula, set off on a grand tour of north-west Asia Minor. They visited a number of cities, including Assos in the Troad. A surviving inscription from that city provides a tantalising glimpse of Caligula playing a highly public role during his father's grand tour. On his accession in 37, the people of Assos sent the new emperor a decree of loyalty, and were keen to remind him of his visit nineteen years earlier. It seems that the not quite six-year-old Caligula, emulating

his father's diplomatic charm, had delivered some sort of address to the city, saying all the right things. The Assos decree asks him on his accession to 'care for the city, as he had promised when he first came with his father Germanicus'.³⁹ This was Caligula's first recorded demonstration of his considerable oratorical skill. To what extent he owed his precocious ability to his father is uncertain, as Germanicus was dead before Caligula entered his truly formative years, but this early incident, even allowing for the inevitable rhetorical exaggeration, does suggest that Germanicus might have encouraged his son's talents in this sphere. At some point Germanicus and Caligula were rejoined by Agrippina, together with her new daughter, and the family continued the journey east, for we next hear of them in Rhodes, where they encountered a man who would become Germanicus' arch-nemesis, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso. Fated to play a key role in the final months of Germanicus' life, Piso was a man of rough tongue and bloody mind, reluctant, if we are to believe Tacitus, to yield ground even to Tiberius. He was an old friend of Augustus, who had actually considered him princeps material. He held the consulship as Tiberius' colleague in 7 BC, followed by governorships in Africa and Spain. He was appointed legate of Syria in AD 17, with the approval of the senate, even though it was an imperial province, to replace Caecilius Criticus Silanus as the new governor of Syria.⁴⁰ He was on his way to his new province when he met Germanicus in Rhodes. It is perhaps possible that Tiberius had at the back of his mind the hope that Piso might be able to exercise some degree of restraint over Germanicus. It seems unlikely that he had been given more sinister instructions deliberately to embarrass the mission, as Tacitus suggests.

Once settled in Syria, in Tacitus' luridly partisan account, Piso proceeded to ingratiate himself with the legions by distributing bribes and relaxing discipline. His wife Munatia Plancina also got involved; she seized every opportunity to denigrate Agrippina, although at the same time apparently trying to emulate her famous role at the Rhine bridge, by riding in the cavalry exercises and taking part in the infantry training manoeuvres.⁴¹ None of this, if true, appears to have interfered with Germanicus' mission. In Armenia he won the acquiescence of Parthia in establishing as king a Roman candidate, Zeno, the son of the client king of Pontus, on the coast of what is now northern Turkey.⁴² Zeno adopted the Armenian name Artaxias, and proved highly popular among his new subjects, ruling for sixteen years. The event is celebrated in a didrachm minted in Caesarea in Cappadocia, almost certainly by Caligula, with Germanicus' head on the obverse, and Zeno Artaxias being crowned by Germanicus on the reverse (Figure 1.2). Cappadocia was organised as a province. The revenues it generated allowed Tiberius to reduce the 1 per cent sales tax imposed throughout the empire by Augustus after the civil wars to 0.5 per cent (see Chapter 14). Commagene was ultimately incorporated into Syria.⁴³ Once these administrative problems had been settled, Germanicus, in late AD 18, made for Syria, where he had his first formal meeting with Piso, at Cyrrhus, in the camp of Legion X. It was a cool encounter; earlier in the year Germanicus had instructed Piso (or possibly Piso's son) to take a detachment of



Figure 1.2 Caligula didrachm (photograph courtesy of Andreas Pangerl, www.romancoins.info)

troops to Armenia, and Piso had apparently chosen to ignore the order. From now on, whenever they met, the atmosphere was tense with friction.

In the winter of 18/19 Germanicus travelled to Egypt, partly for administrative reasons, partly to visit the antiquities, presumably taking Caligula with him, although this cannot be confirmed. He was received rapturously in Alexandria, and from there made an excursion up the Nile. When he returned to Alexandria, it was to find a rebuke from Tiberius awaiting him.⁴⁴ The emperor had written to remind him that Augustus had banned senators from visiting Egypt without permission. The prohibition arose from Egypt's enormous importance as a supplier of grain, but the concern in Germanicus' case was surely over a breach of protocol rather than any fear that he had designs on the province. Tiberius clearly felt that his adopted son had forgotten his proper place, and needed to be brought down to earth, if only for his own good. Tiberius would not have forgotten that Germanicus had at times demonstrated a poor sense of proportion during his German command, and that this blind spot had led almost to disaster.

On his return to Syria, Germanicus found that the disagreement with Piso over their respective mandates had rendered effective collaboration impossible. They clashed violently, seriously enough that Piso decided that it would be prudent for him to take his leave. Soon after his departure Germanicus fell gravely ill. He was convinced that Piso, in collusion with his wife Plancina, had poisoned him, and the discovery of spells and curses and evidence of witchcraft strengthened this conviction. Germanicus died in Antioch on October 10, AD 19, at the age of thirty-three.⁴⁵ It is more than likely there was nothing sinister about his death. Syria was a notoriously unhealthy spot, and almost a century later the emperor Trajan would die from a disease contracted there.⁴⁶ Agrippina herself was ill before she left, and even the infamous poisoner Martina, thought to have been Piso's agent in the murder of Germanicus, died at Brundisium on her way back.⁴⁷ All the same, before his death, Germanicus asked his entourage to ensure that the

villainy of Piso and his wife be brought to account. He also left telling instructions for Agrippina – that she was to check her pride and to avoid provoking those more powerful than herself. His funeral was held at Antioch, the body being exposed before cremation to show proof of poisoning.⁴⁸ Finally, Agrippina, worn out and ill, and determined on revenge, set sail for Italy, with Caligula and her daughter Livilla.

Word of the lingering death of Germanicus had created an especially tense atmosphere in Rome. The earliest reports provoked a surge of resentment against Tiberius and his mother Livia, and sowed the suspicion that they had plotted the murder in collusion with Piso and Plancina – the rumoured motive supposedly being a fear that if Germanicus had come to power he would have restored the old republic. There was temporary jubilation with a false report that he had survived, but it served only to deepen the grief when it turned out to be untrue, and intensified popular sympathy for Agrippina. There was reaction to the death outside Rome too, vividly described by Suetonius. This is, of course, of limited historical importance in itself but a valuable illustration of the kind of legend that grew around Germanicus, one that Caligula was able later to exploit for his own ends. Barbarian nations, we are told, at war with Rome or with one another, sought truces, foreign kings removed their beards and as a further gesture shaved their wives' heads (though not, apparently their own), and the King of Parthia even took the unprecedented step of interrupting his hunting and his banquets.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Agrippina, sailing through the winter season, had by early AD 20 reached the island of Corcyra (Corfu), off north-west Greece. She lingered there to regain her spirits and also, no doubt, to make sure that news of her imminent arrival would precede her to Italy and guarantee her a spectacular reception. Finally she reached Brundisium (Brindisi) on Italy's east coast. As she entered the harbour every spot that commanded a view of the sea was occupied. The crowds watched as she disembarked, carrying the urn with Germanicus' ashes, and clutching the little Caligula and his sister. Two cohorts of the praetorian guard escorted the urn on its journey to Rome, carried on the shoulders of tribunes and centurions. The magistrates of Calabria, Apulia and Campania were instructed to honour the ashes as they entered their districts, and in every town they passed through the people donned mourning garb and burned incense. Germanicus' brother, Claudius, along with Germanicus' brother by adoption, Drusus, the son of Tiberius, together with the rest of his children, met the cortège at Tarracina, and as it made its way into Rome the consuls and members of the senate, as well as ordinary people, went out to meet it. In a great public ceremony the ashes were laid in the mausoleum of Augustus. That the general population might have lamented that 'the state had collapsed and no hope remained' would have been troubling enough for Tiberius, but what must have rankled most was the outburst of popular feeling for Agrippina, called, in Tacitus' words, the *decus patriae, solum Augusti sanguinem, unicum antiquitatis specimen* ('the glory of the nation, the lone survivor of Augustus' bloodline, the one surviving model of the past the glory of her country').⁵⁰ What effect the spectacle and adulation had on Caligula, now

seven years old and seeking to cope with the death of his father, is not recorded, but it must surely have been powerful.

Germanicus had been a man of worthy but not outstanding achievements. He was, in fact, far more important for the political future of his son as a dead father than he could have possibly been as a live one. His untimely end allowed the creation of a legend of superhuman qualities which, no doubt with some external manipulation, would be transferred in the popular mind to the person of Caligula. Germanicus' death in Syria in AD 19 marked a key stage in the process that would bring his son to the throne some eighteen years later.

Notes

- 1 'Julio-Claudian' is a modern term, helpful and informative for the non-specialist, but is, strictly speaking, conceptually anachronistic; see, for instance, Simpson 2008.
- 2 On Claudius' childhood ailments: Suet. *Cal.* 2.1.
- 3 Livy, *Per.* 142; Suet. *Claud.* 1.2–3; Dio 55.1.3–4.
- 4 For 16, Levick 1966; for 15, Sumner 1967.
- 5 Tac. *Ann.* 1.33.3, 2.73.1, 82.3; Suet. *Cal.* 3–5; see also, Dio 57.18.6–8. Adams 2007: 99 notes that Germanicus spent little time in Rome. An absence from the city seems, if anything, to have generally enhanced the reputation and popularity of members of the imperial family. The imagined myth is always more potent than reality.
- 6 On the complexity of Tacitus' portrayal of Germanicus: Pelling 1993; see also, recently, Limoges 2008; Williams 2009 who argues that Tacitus used Germanicus to show the paradox of the imperial system, with both positive and negative features.
- 7 Tac. *Ann.* 2.72.1, 4.12.7, 52–54, 6.25.3; Suet. *Aug.* 86.3; Dio 57.6.3.
- 8 Tac. *Ann.* 2.54.1 places Livilla's birth in early 18 in Lesbos, in error, according to Mommsen 1878, who argued for a date of late 17. The dates of 15 and 16 respectively for Agrippina and Drusilla, in that order, are conventionally accepted by most scholars. Humphrey 1979 challenged this assumption, arguing that Drusilla was the oldest sister. Suet. *Cal.* 7 states that the girls were born *continuo triennio*, which, Humphrey pointed out (see also Herz 1981a: 103; Barrett 1996: 230–2; Begert 1996: 40–1) may mean 'in a three year period' rather than 'in three years in succession'. More recently Hurley 2003 has defended the traditional order, Agrippina, Drusilla, Livilla, but with the dates 14, 16, 18. The child carried by Agrippina in the autumn of AD 14 (Tac. *Ann.* 1.44.2), generally thought to have been stillborn, would on Hurley's reconstruction be the younger Agrippina.
- 9 Suet. *Cal.* 1.1; Dio 55.31.1, 56.25.2; Germanicus' return some time before the end of AD 11 is dictated by the birth of Caligula in August of the following year. Germanicus was able to bypass the praetorship and proceed directly to the consulship, five years before the legal minimum age.
- 10 Dio 56.27.5. On the *Ludi Martiales*, Dio 60.5.3, see also 55.10.1–8; the games celebrated on May 12 (*CIL* i. p. 305; Ovid *Fast.* 5.597) mark the provisional erection of the temple in the Capitol in 20 BC.
- 11 Suet. *Cal.* 8.1; *Fasti* Vallenses and *Fasti* Pighiani; confirmed by Dio 59.6.1, who gives Caligula's exact age on accession.
- 12 Suet. *Cal.* 8; among admirers, see Baldwin 1983: 158; Guastella 1992: 100–4; Wallace-Hadrill 1995: 88–91; Adams 2007: 74; for a judicious assessment: Wardle 1994: 127–9.
- 13 Wightman 1970: 129–30 notes that *Ambitarvius/i* has not been identified, although mediaeval documents mention an *Ambitivus*. *Supra confluentes* probably means near Koblenz, at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle.

- 14 Taylor 1945 observes that the triple element of the epigram suggests the standard formula of a riddle. Woods 2011 suggests that the couplet was originally part of a poem on Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus.
- 15 On the *Acta Diurna* see Baldwin 1979. Schulz 1942, 1943 suggests a reference to a registry of birth, preserved in the treasury (the *Aerarium Saturni*).
- 16 Sen. *Cons.* 2.18.4; Tac. *Ann.* 1.41.3; Antium: Tac. *Ann.* 15.23.1; Suet. *Aug.* 58, *Nero* 6.1; Dio 58.25.2; Blake 1959: 40; Coarelli 1982: 295–6.
- 17 Plin. *NH* 32.1–4.
- 18 On Suetonius' acquaintance with the *Annales* see Syme 1958c: 781; Wardle 1994: 40–5.
- 19 Tac. *Ann.* 1.41.3, 69.5; Suet. *Cal.* 9.1; Dio 57.5.6; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 3.4, *Epit.* 3.2; Eutrop. 7.12.1; Suda sv. *Kaligolas*. Suet. *Cal.* 52 notes that as an adult he wore a range of footwear, including military boots, the *speculatoria caliga*. The name 'Caligula' does not appear in inscriptions, with the exception of an obvious forgery from Gallipoli (*CIL* III.28*). Seneca (*Cons.* 18.4) records that he was offended when addressed as Caligula by a *primipilaris* (senior centurion) but does not make clear whether the offence arose from the inherent character of the name or the familiarity in someone of inferior rank; he notes that Caligula was offended also when addressed by a Herennius Macer as 'Gaius'; see Malloch 2009: 489–91.
- 20 On the succession, see Vell. 2.124.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.7–13; Suet. *Tib.* 22–4; Dio 57.2–3.
- 21 Hohl 1933; Timpe 1962: 37; Levick 1999: 68–9, 75–81; Seager 2005: 53–4.
- 22 Tac. *Ann.* 1.31–49; Suet. *Tib.* 25.2; Dio 57.5–6; Velleius 2.125.1 without explicitly speaking of a movement in favour of Germanicus, hints at it by saying the soldiers sought *novum ducem*.
- 23 Tac. *Ann.* 1.32.5. The incident involved an attack by the mutineers on their centurions, and modern scholars invariably call Cassius a centurion at this time. But his rank is not specified, and the assumption is unwarranted. In fact it is more natural to read Tacitus' passage as the remarkable scene of a young soldier going to the rescue of the veteran centurions, in contrast to the weakness of the commander Aulus Caecina. Since the centurionate came after many years of service, and Tacitus emphasises Cassius' youth, describing him as an *adulescens*, it is highly unlikely that he could have held the rank of centurion in AD 14 and still been serving in AD 41, even though he is *senior* by then (Suet. *Cal.* 56.2). Balsdon 1934b: 102 insists that Cassius was a tribune in AD 14, presumably because Tacitus goes on to say that the tribunes could not keep order, but the connection is unlikely.
- 24 Dio 57.5.6–7; Suet. *Cal.* 48.1 reflects this version of events in the report that during his German campaign of AD 39/40 Caligula, now emperor, planned to punish his own troops because they had earlier seized him during the mutiny.
- 25 Tac. *Ann.* 1.41–4; Suet. *Cal.* 9; see Burian 1964; Cizek 1977: 39; Hurley 1993: 26; Wardle 1994: 137. Hurley 1989: 336–8 suggests that Tacitus and Suetonius had access to the same source, but that Suetonius also made use of a text that put special stress on Caligula's role. Pliny the Elder's *Bella Germaniae* could well have been one of those sources, but not the only one; Malloch 2004a suggests the recasting by Tacitus, Dio and Suetonius of a common source as required by their different narrative intentions.
- 26 The concessions granted by Germanicus were later cancelled by Tiberius: Tac. *Ann.* 1.78.2; Dio 57.6.5.
- 27 Tac. *Ann.* 1.49.5–51.9; Dio 57.6.1.
- 28 Tac. *Ann.* 1.55.1 seems to indicate that the triumph was initially voted for AD 14. Timpe 1968: 43 argues for AD 15.
- 29 She was probably carrying her daughter Agrippina the Younger.
- 30 Tac. *Ann.* 2.26.
- 31 Tac. *Ann.* 2.43.7, 3.56.5; the marriage between Drusus and Germanicus' sister Livilla must be placed very soon after AD 4, when Gaius Caesar, Livilla's first husband, died.

- This sequence of events is suggested by the fact that Drusus and Livilla's daughter, Julia, was already old enough to be married herself by AD 20 (to Nero, brother of Caligula).
- 32 Marsh 1926, 1931: 65–8, attacked by Allen 1941, see Talbert 1984: 276–7.
- 33 Tac. *Ann.* 2.41.2–4; the defeated Germans are identified by Tacitus as Cherusci, Chatti and Angrivarii and 'other tribes' west of the Elbe.
- 34 Tac. *Ann.* 2.42.2–6; Suet. *Tib.* 37.4; Dio 57.17.3–7. Tacitus and Dio both place his death in 17, but it may have occurred shortly before (see Magie 1950: 1349 n. 1).
- 35 Tac. *Ann.* 2.42.7; Jos. *AJ* 18.53.
- 36 On the nature of Germanicus' *imperium* on this mission, *maius imperium* with reference to specific proconsuls, see Eck 1996: 159–61.
- 37 On the Camée, see Baldson 1936; Jucker 1977; Megow 1987: 202–7, A 85; Boschung 1989: 64–8; Giard 1998; Meyer 2000: 11–28 (he assigns it to the Neronian period, and argues that it was reworked in the Fourth Century); Giuliani and Schmidt 2010; Pollini 2013.
- 38 Tac. *Ann.* 2.53.1; Koestermann 1958: 339 sees Germanicus' visit to Nicopolis as a provocative act, perhaps implying that it marked him out as one who would inherit the world pacified by Augustus.
- 39 *IGR* 4.251 (Smallwood 33).
- 40 Sen. *De Ira* 1.19.3; Tac. *Ann.* 3.12.1, 13.1–2.
- 41 Tac. *Ann.* 2.55.6.
- 42 Barrett 1978: 444, 447.
- 43 Armenia: Suet. *Cal.* 1.2 states that Germanicus defeated (*devicisset*) the King of Armenia, either a confused error or textual corruption in the manuscripts; Cappadocia: Tac. *Ann.* 1.78.2, 2.42; Dio 57.17.7; Commagene: Tac. *Ann.* 2.56.5; there is no information on the fate of Philopator's kingdom in Cilicia; it may similarly have been swallowed up by Syria.
- 44 Syria: Tac. *Ann.* 2.57; Egypt: Tac. *Ann.* 2.59.
- 45 The date is given by the *Fasti* of Antium (*EJ* p.63). Tac. *Ann.* 2.83.3 says that he died in the suburb of Epidaphne, a confusion with Antioch epi Daphne, the name given to Antioch because of its most famous quarter. On the illness, see Tac. *Ann.* 2.69–72.
- 46 Dio 57.18.9 accepts without question the tradition that Piso and Plancina murdered Germanicus. Suetonius (*Cal.* 1.2, 2) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.69.3, 73, 3.14.2) are more cautious.
- 47 Tac. *Ann.* 3.7.2. On this see Syme 1981c.
- 48 Pliny *NH* 11.187; Suet. *Cal.* 1.2; Tac. *Ann.* 2.73.4 doubts that the body showed any signs of poisoning. The heart survived the cremation, which, according to the wisdom of the day, showed that he had been poisoned. Piso at his trial made the point that heart attack victims similarly did not burn; see D'Ercé 1969.
- 49 Suet. *Cal.* 5.
- 50 Tac. *Ann.* 3.1–4.

SUCCESSION

The untimely death of Germanicus in AD 19 would naturally have caused Agrippina much personal and private grief; but at the same time she must also have felt a more pragmatic and political concern that the loss of her popular husband would deliver a serious blow to the imperial ambitions she so clearly harboured for their sons. Moreover, expectations that the succession would pass automatically to Tiberius' own son, Drusus, must surely have been strengthened when Drusus' wife, Livilla, gave birth a little later in that same year to twin sons, Tiberius Gemellus (*gemellus* means 'twin' in Latin) and, in honour of his late uncle, Germanicus (the latter died in 23).¹ The public interest in Germanicus' death was given no chance to abate. Piso's return to Rome, early in the following year, AD 20, would have aggravated the existing tensions. He was placed on trial for murder, extortion and treason, and his wife Plancina was charged along with him. His subsequent suicide would have done little to calm public disquiet, especially since Tiberius' intervention on behalf of Plancina (at the request of his mother), would have served to confirm a popular suspicion that he and Livia had played some ill-defined but definitely murky role in Germanicus' death, and might be scheming to turn their malign attentions now to his widow and children.²

For his part, Tiberius seems to have made a genuine effort to put any such concerns to rest. He dutifully promoted the sons of Germanicus, a task no doubt made much easier by Drusus' apparently genuine affection for the children. At the outset, Caligula did not in fact benefit directly from Tiberius' beneficence, simply because he was a child and had two older brothers, Nero and Drusus. Ultimately this apparent disadvantage would actually work in his favour; during the subsequent political intrigues his brothers were to become the targets of a political campaign while Caligula remained very much on the sidelines. In AD 20 Tiberius began to advance the career of the oldest son, Nero, commending him in the senate on his coming to manhood at the age of fourteen. He was granted a priesthood and the right to run for public office though still below the statutory age.³ As another mark of his regard for Germanicus, Tiberius also arranged Nero's betrothal to his granddaughter, Julia.

A complicating factor during this period was the rise of the notorious Lucius Aelius Sejanus, Prefect of the praetorian guard, a man of evil reputation, but clearly also someone of considerable charm and sexual charisma, as well as of undoubted political savvy.⁴ Himself the son of a praetorian Prefect, by the time Tiberius came to power, Sejanus had managed to work his way into the emperor's good books, and secured his appointment first as joint Prefect with his own father (in AD 14), and subsequently as sole Prefect (16/17). By AD 20 the sources tell us that Tiberius was publicly describing him as the 'partner of his labours'.⁵ His meteoric rise was symbolically capped by the betrothal of his daughter Junilla to the son of Germanicus' brother Claudius. Sadly, it would prove to be a short-lived union. A few days after the ceremony the young man, perhaps anxious to prove that he had not inherited his father's clumsiness, threw a pear into the air, deftly caught it in his mouth, then choked to death.⁶

Sejanus' ambitions had a major impact on the circumstances of the young Caligula, but a proper understanding of those ambitions falls outside the scope of this book. In practical terms there could probably have been little prospect of his securing the principate for himself. There was no shortage of claimants from within the imperial house, and his equestrian rank would have surely been an almost fatal impediment. He possibly saw his potential role more as that of a power behind and controlling the throne, acting as a kind of regent for a young prince, an arrangement that he might have hoped to ensure by marrying into the imperial family. Whatever his ambitions, in furthering them Sejanus faced two major opponents – Tiberius' son, Drusus, who had a reputation as something of a hothead, and, possibly even more fearsome, Germanicus' widow, Agrippina, ever vigilant in the relentless promotion of her sons. Drusus' hostility would have been the more immediately apparent, since his natural role as the emperor's closest ally was being usurped. The antagonism between the two men grew increasingly tense, until they reputedly resorted to fisticuffs. Sejanus then mounted a more indirect assault, which he launched through Drusus' wife. Turning his powerful charms on Livilla he lured her into his bed, and, it was later alleged, exploited her sexual infatuation by persuading her to eliminate her husband. In September, AD 23, to the immense grief of Tiberius, Drusus died. There is a very good chance that he had been poisoned, by his wife and her lover, although no one, outside the putative guilty pair, had the slightest inkling of this sinister possibility at the time.⁷

Drusus' death would have left only one serious obstacle standing in the way of Sejanus' ruthless progress. The sons of Germanicus, specifically the two older boys, Nero and Drusus, aged sixteen and seventeen respectively, would now have been the obvious candidates for the succession. The two other potential claimants, Tiberius' natural grandson, Gemellus, and his grandson by adoption, Caligula, were still both too young to be taken seriously as contenders.⁸ Tiberius had shown considerable goodwill towards Nero and Drusus, and if their mother had behaved with even a minimum of tact she might well have survived Sejanus' inevitable assault. But tact was not Agrippina's strongest suit, and in the event she succeeded in playing right into the Prefect's hands. She forgot the wise advice that her husband

gave her on his deathbed, to be more self-effacing, and the conviction that she had stubbornly and publicly maintained since Antioch, that her family was the target of malign forces, brought her into such vigorous opposition to Tiberius that her behaviour seemed to verge on, perhaps even into, treason.

Agrippina's ill-concealed ambitions for Nero and Drusus would doubtless have offended and alarmed Livia and Livilla, Tiberius' mother and his son's widow; both would naturally have been troubled that in the political struggle raging around them, Livilla's own son, Gemellus, seemed to have been sidelined. This was an anxiety that Sejanus was happy to exploit. Egged on by him, they grumbled to Tiberius that Agrippina was casting her greedy eyes on the throne. Early in 24 there occurred an inadvertent diplomatic blunder that showed just how irksome Tiberius was now finding Agrippina's attitude. As the priests were taking traditional vows for the safety of the emperor they included Nero and Drusus in the prayers. Ironically, Tacitus suggests that they did this to please Tiberius. He, however, was furious that two youths should be elevated to his level, and accused the priests of caving in to pressure from Agrippina (which they denied but which may well have been true). He then proceeded to lecture the senators on the dangerous effect of excessive distinctions on young and impressionable minds. Tiberius' extreme reaction to this incident was exacerbated, according to Tacitus, by the poisonous insinuations of Sejanus, who now fed to the emperor the idea of an emerging split in the state and the formation of an 'Agrippina faction' (*qui se partium Agrippinae vocent*).⁹

Sejanus was shrewd and experienced enough to avoid a direct assault on Agrippina for the moment; his tactic for now was to strike through her prominent supporters. In 26 a charge of adultery and of treason against the person of Tiberius was brought against Claudia Pulchra, Agrippina's second cousin and a close friend. This provoked Agrippina to intercede aggressively with the emperor.¹⁰ Her heavy-handed intervention merely served to irritate Tiberius, and she failed in any case to save her cousin, who, along with her lover, was condemned on the charge of adultery. The prosecution of Claudia, and the clumsy intervention, marked a key point in Agrippina's almost inexorable progress towards her own destruction. Residual anger from the incident may well account for Tiberius' refusal shortly afterwards to grant her request to remarry.¹¹ The name of the intended husband is not revealed, but the later association of her name with that of Asinius Gallus certainly makes him a prime candidate. Tiberius no doubt felt that with the support of a prominent husband Agrippina would become an even greater political threat. Moreover her suitor, if Gallus, would hardly have found favour with the emperor, since he had earlier married Tiberius' ex-wife Vipsania, for whom Tiberius had continued to feel affection even after their divorce, a divorce dictated by political necessity, not personal antipathy. The atmosphere grew increasingly tense, and Agrippina even convinced herself that Tiberius was plotting to poison her at dinner.¹²

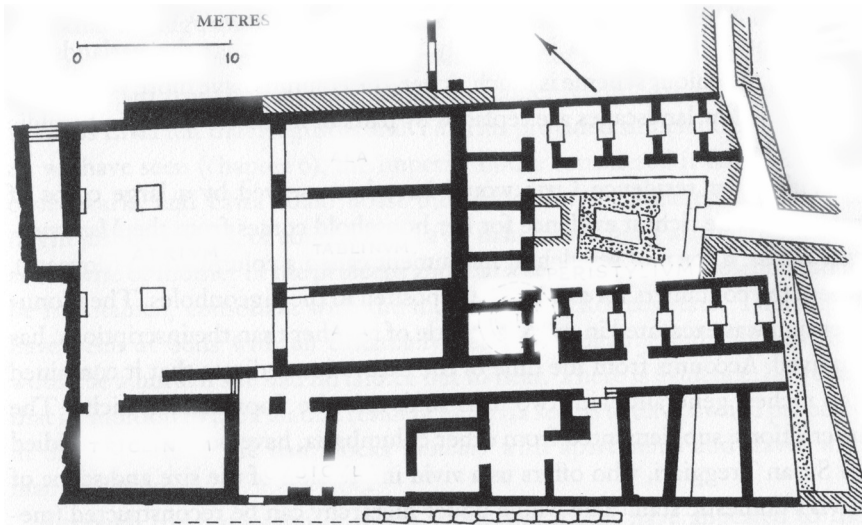
By AD 26, Tiberius had become thoroughly disheartened by the vicious political atmosphere in Rome, and he left the city for Campania, and from there

went on to the island of Capri.¹³ He would not return to Rome until after he was dead, when Caligula accompanied his corpse for its funeral there. In the emperor's absence, Sejanus could ratchet up his campaign against Agrippina and her family. His first target was Caligula's brother Nero, who, being the oldest, would naturally be the main candidate for the succession among Germanicus' sons, as Sejanus would have been reminded when the young man received the quaestorship on December 5 of that year. Although supposedly modest and reasonable, as Tacitus not very convincingly would have us believe, Nero did have a habit of speaking his mind more bluntly than was good for him, and the example set him by his mother would not have helped. Sejanus bribed Nero's freedmen and clients to urge him on. His ill-considered statements were routinely noted down and reported, with due exaggeration, to Tiberius. Sejanus even worked through Nero's brother Drusus, exploiting what Tacitus, giving us a very rare glimpse behind the façade of Germanicus' perfect family, reveals as his seething jealousy of Nero. Nero, it seems, was resented by Drusus as their mother's favourite.¹⁴ As before, Caligula continued to be protected by his youth. In August of 26 he would only have turned fourteen, probably still too young to have a clear sense that his own prospects were essentially eclipsed by the hopes placed in his older brothers.

The details of Sejanus' final campaign are difficult to untangle, and the evidence of the various literary sources is often contradictory and difficult to reconcile.¹⁵ He may have launched his attack in two phases. Beginning at some time in 27 Agrippina was forced to stay out of Rome, and seems to have been kept under some sort of military guard in her luxurious villa in Herculaneum in Campania.¹⁶ Nero's movements were also restricted, but in his case perhaps *to* Rome. In the absence of their mother, arrangements would have to be made for Caligula and his sisters, and it could well have been in this year that the children were placed under the care of their formidable great-grandmother Livia, in her home on the Palatine in 27.¹⁷ Livia had been a towering yet paradoxically discreet presence in Roman life since her marriage to Octavian in 38 BC and had exercised a considerable influence on events, albeit from behind the scenes. By AD 27 she had, of course, ceased to play a central role in affairs of state, and, indeed, Tiberius reputedly spoke to her only once after his retirement to Capri. Nevertheless, she knew probably better than any other the complex workings of the court. Caligula, at an impressionable age, found himself under the wing of someone who would teach him that guile and cunning could achieve more in Imperial Rome than the kind of head-on attack his mother specialised in, guidance that would prove invaluable on the path to his own succession. It was probably this craftiness that provoked Caligula later to liken Livia to the arch-trickster of legend, calling her 'a Ulysses in a stola'. The *stola* was a long woollen sleeveless dress, the mark of respectable *matronae*, the female equivalent of the toga. Thus, he implied, she possessed a sharp and politically astute mind, but it was concealed beneath a veneer of austere Roman dignity. It is an expression of admiration, not of contempt, and there seems to have been some affection between them; at any rate on his accession Caligula finally honoured her legacies, left unpaid by Tiberius.¹⁸

The discovery of lead pipes in the complex of imperial buildings on the Palatine, stamped with the name Iulia Augusta, which she received after Augustus' death, suggest that the dwelling to the north of the Temple of Apollo constituted the private apartments for Livia from at least after AD 14, when Tiberius from all accounts would have welcomed some space between himself and his mother (see [Figures 11.5](#) and [12.1](#)). This identification is of some interest for our story since it is in fact one of only two buildings that can be identified specifically as places where Caligula resided for a time. The house was excavated in the nineteenth century under the auspices of Napoleon III. It was built initially, in slightly irregular *opus reticulatum*, between 75 and 50 BC. An entry corridor to the west led into a large courtyard with squared pillars (the bases survive) that would have supported a sloped roof. Three large rooms to the east have mosaic floors and a series of fine wall paintings in the 'Second Style' (about 30 BC), with a range of scenes, including mythological and Egyptian, on plaster that covers earlier architectural features like doors, suggesting a refurbishment of the original house. In the range of rooms located in the eastern part of the complex are signs of an *impluvium* (pool) indicating that the atrium of the original house had been located here. There was also a range of rooms to the south. The house was presumably one of those republican residences bought up by Octavian and remodelled after Actium.¹⁹ It was a fine, though not palatial, residence, and Caligula would certainly not have lacked physical comfort ([Figure 2.1](#)).

Caligula was for the moment in safe hands, but the attacks on his mother's supporters continued. In late 27, Titus Sabinus, a close friend of Germanicus and a constant companion of Agrippina, was charged with treason. He had been tricked into making unwise comments about Tiberius while agents hid up in the



[Figure 2.1](#) House of Livia (after Lugli)

attic and noted everything down. Early in the following year he was tried and executed. In writing to the senate on the case, Tiberius noted that his life was in constant danger from his enemies. Although he mentioned no names he left no doubt in the minds of the senators, according to Tacitus, that he meant Agrippina and Nero.²⁰ But if so, he seems to have taken no further action against them for the time being. Tacitus attributes his restraint to the protection afforded by Livia, a line of defence that was lost when Livia died, in the early part of AD 29, at the age of eighty-six, a longevity that she attributed to her regular intake of Pucinum wine.²¹ Any safeguard that Livia might have provided need not have stemmed from affection for Agrippina (indeed, the sources suggest antipathy between the two women). But while Livia was alive Sejanus would presumably have been reluctant to make the naked bid for power that the elimination of Agrippina and Nero would have exposed. Her death changed everything. The details are unknown to us, but Sejanus apparently pressed his case with Tiberius, and a letter from the emperor was delivered to the senate, denouncing Agrippina and her son (Tacitus reports a popular belief that it had been sent much earlier but suppressed by Livia). It studiously avoided charging treason, merely accusing Nero of sexual perversions and Agrippina of 'haughty language and vexatious pride'. While the senate dithered in formulating a response, a rowdy protest took place outside the senate house. Demonstrators paraded images of Agrippina and Nero and claimed that the supposed letter of Tiberius was in fact a forgery. Pamphlets under the names of consular senators were spread about, denouncing Sejanus.²²

A second letter then arrived from Tiberius, prompted by Sejanus, berating the senators for their inactivity. Unfortunately, Tacitus' narrative breaks off at this key point, picking up again in late 31, and to add to the frustration there are extensive gaps in Dio's account, thus making it extremely difficult to reconstruct events. Philo speaks of some sort of proceedings against Agrippina (he does not mention Nero), presumably conducted *in camera* before the emperor.²³ We have no further details. That she might have been charged with planning to incite rebellion is suggested by the report of Tacitus that there were some who urged her to 'seek refuge' with the Rhine armies, or to appear at the statue of Augustus in the forum during a busy time of the day and make a public appeal for support. For all Tacitus' partisan scepticism, it is possible that Tiberius' suspicions were well grounded, and that Agrippina was involved in some sort of movement against him.²⁴ Both she and Nero, who was declared a 'public enemy' (*hostis*), were banished to small volcanic islands lying to the west of Naples, Nero to Pontia (Ponza) and Agrippina to Pandateria (Ventotene). She was not an easy prisoner, and according to Tacitus was force-fed to prevent suicide.²⁵

Caligula, it seems, continued to be protected by simply being the youngest son. His career had not been advanced. Usually at the age of fourteen it was traditional for Roman boys to put aside the purple-striped toga they had worn in childhood, the *toga praetexta*, in favour of a plain white version, the *toga virilis*, in a ceremony that marked the transition to manhood (the wearing of the *toga praetexta* was resumed by those entering certain magistracies). This could appropriately

have occurred in Caligula's case in AD 26, but he had still not yet undergone the ceremony by early 29, when he gave a further demonstration of the precocious rhetorical skills he had displayed as a child when touring the east with his father, by delivering the funeral oration in honour of Livia, who had stood in for his mother during the previous two years.²⁶ After Livia's death he was placed in the care of yet another great lady of the imperial house, his grandmother Antonia, the much-admired widow of Tiberius' brother Drusus. He would stay there until summoned to join Tiberius in Capri in AD 31. Caligula's sister Drusilla was also at Antonia's house at this time, and the company probably also included his other sister Livilla (the oldest, Agrippina, had married in 28). Only one event is recorded during this period; Suetonius reports the gossip that Antonia caught her grandson *in flagrantibus* with Drusilla, a story that should probably be viewed with some scepticism (Chapter 5).

Antonia may well have left her mark on Caligula in these years. As the daughter of Mark Antony she would doubtless have sought to make Caligula aware of his ancestor's qualities and achievements, especially in the east, where Antonia had very close contacts. She was friendly with the family of Herod the Great, especially his niece Berenice. Through her father Antony she was half-sister to Antony's daughter Cleopatra Selene, wife of the client ruler Juba II of Mauretania in Africa. After his accession Caligula was generally respectful towards Rome's client kings and may have started to develop this attitude while he was in Antonia's house. During his stay there, it seems that Antonia was playing ward to some of her distant relatives, the sons of the murdered King Cotys of Thrace.²⁷ On their father's death, shortly before AD 19, Rhoemetaces, Polemo and Cotys (II) were sent to be brought up in Rome and they apparently spent time under the same roof as Caligula. In a decree issued in the city of Cyzicus in north-east Asia Minor on Caligula's accession, they take much pride in describing themselves as *syntrophous kai hetairous heautoi gegonotas* ('brought up together with him as comrades'). This early friendship seems to have borne fruit later when their boyhood companion bestowed kingdoms on all three brothers. Not all of Antonia's associates were royal foreigners, of course; among her Roman visitors were Valerius Asiaticus and Lucius Vitellius.²⁸ Asiaticus, an Allobrogian from Vienne, much admired by Tacitus, was the first Narbonese to attain the consulship (as suffect in AD 35), which he repeated with a second term in 46. He became a friend of Caligula despite an obvious disparity in years (he held his first consulship in AD 35); Vitellius' son, the future emperor, became a close friend, and they would later race chariots together.

With Agrippina off the scene, Sejanus worked hard to consolidate his position. He understood the value of having allies in key military commands. In 29 Upper Germany was assigned to a man destined to play a major part in the events of Caligula's reign, Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus. As a mark of their closeness, Gaetulicus' daughter was betrothed to Sejanus' son.²⁹ Sejanus' now felt confident enough to turn his attention to Caligula's middle brother, Drusus. He had foolishly allowed himself to be used as a dupe in the campaign against his mother and Nero, and had perhaps deluded himself into believing that he enjoyed

the support and friendship of the powerful Prefect. He was apparently on Capri with Tiberius when his mother and brother Nero were condemned.³⁰ Sejanus used an old familiar tactic, of attacking Drusus through Drusus' wife, Aemilia Lepida (Dio provides the information, and alleges an affair between Lepida and Sejanus). She brought a number of unidentified and reportedly false charges against her husband, and in AD 30 Drusus was sent back to Rome, arrested, and imprisoned in a cell beneath the imperial residence on the Palatine Hill. He never emerged, and died there in particularly horrible circumstances.³¹

Sejanus' power now seemed unassailable, and a measure of his success is provided by the honours that befell him in 30 and 31. He had earlier, in AD 25, unsuccessfully sought the hand of his mistress Livilla, widow of Tiberius' son. In 30 permission was granted and they were betrothed. Finally, he was chosen by Tiberius to be his colleague as consul in 31, despite his equestrian status. This was clearly an enormous distinction, and in May 31, when he was bound to follow Tiberius' lead and step down from the consulship, he received proconsular *imperium*.³² It is impossible to determine Tiberius' motives in advancing Sejanus' career in this dramatic, even baffling, way. It is hard to believe that the emperor could feel very confident that in the event of his own death the Prefect would loyally keep an eye on things until Caligula or Gemellus, who would become Sejanus' stepson, was old enough to assume the office of princeps. But in any case, by about the middle of the year the Prefect's fortunes took a dramatic turn for the worse. The precise reasons for his fall from grace are unknown to us (the relevant chapters of Tacitus' *Annals* are missing), but the sources suggest he was suspected of plotting against Tiberius.³³ According to Josephus, Antonia smuggled a letter to the emperor in Capri through her freedman Pallas, warning him of the dangers. Dio adds the intriguing detail that the letter was written out by Caenis, Antonia's servant, who famously went on later to be the much-loved mistress of the emperor Vespasian.³⁴ If there is any truth to the story it could represent Antonia's natural desire to protect her grandson's interests. While it seems implausible that Sejanus would have planned any coup against Tiberius, it is reasonable to suspect that having neutralised Nero and Drusus he would have moved into gear against Caligula. Certainly, in the aftermath of Sejanus' fall, when retribution was being wreaked on his old supporters, an ex-praetor called Sextius Paconianus was brought to trial for joining what Tacitus calls the 'plot' (*dolus*) of Sejanus against Caligula.³⁵ At the very least, the later official version of events seems to have been that Sejanus' downfall was the outcome of his involvement in some such intrigue. In the brief autobiography, now lost, written by Tiberius before his death, and seen by Suetonius, the emperor claimed that he had punished Sejanus for venting his hatred on the children of Germanicus (*adversus liberos Germanici*).³⁶ But significantly he did not afterwards revoke the order for Drusus' arrest, nor for Agrippina's banishment. It was too late for Nero, who was already dead by the time that Sejanus fell, in circumstances that were arranged afterwards to suggest suicide (Suetonius claims that he was tricked into suicide by a bogus death sentence).³⁷

At some point before Caligula's nineteenth birthday (August 31, AD 31), Tiberius summoned him to Capri.³⁸ Tiberius may well have wanted to protect him from the political dangers he would inevitably face in Rome as the last remaining son of Germanicus. The future emperor's career began now to make its first advances. Soon after his arrival he was at long last granted the *toga virilis*, in a low-key ceremony unmarked by the generous dispensation of cash to the public that had attended his brothers' ceremonies.³⁹ The modesty of the arrangements were deliberate on Tiberius' part, and quite in character, a deliberate attempt to avoid Caligula's head being turned, as seemed to have happened to his brothers.⁴⁰ Also Tiberius asked the senate not to make him conceited by piling on numerous or premature honours.⁴¹ He was, however, appointed to a priesthood. Dio reports that the date of the office coincided with that given to Sejanus and his son, hence before October 18 of that year, when Sejanus fell.⁴² On the occasion Tiberius spoke well of him, praising his *pietas* and *indoles* ('sense of duty and good character'). Dio adds the note that by his kind words Tiberius indicated that Caligula was to be his successor, and that this prospect was very well received by the Romans.⁴³ This surely reads far too much into Tiberius' pronouncement, and any popular reaction to such a notion would in any case have been fuelled the memory of his father Germanicus rather than any perception of his own merits. At this point he must have been almost totally unknown.

Tiberius struck against Sejanus on October 18, AD 31.⁴⁴ To engineer the operation he called on the services of Quintus Naevius Cordus Sutorius Macro, an individual who would go on to play a prominent role in the events of Caligula's succession. Macro was a 'self-made' man of modest origins, from the town of Alba Fucens in central Italy. His rise from obscurity, before Sejanus' fall, is unrecorded, except that he had been a Prefect of the vigiles, whose fourteen cohorts served in Rome essentially as a combination fire brigade and police force.⁴⁵ It appears that Macro entered the city on the night of October 17, AD 31, having been secretly appointed to replace Sejanus as praetorian Prefect. He fooled him into entering the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, where a senate meeting was to be held, by giving him the impression that he was going to hear an announcement that he had been granted *tribunicia potestas*. The praetorians who normally guarded the senate were ordered by Macro to return to their barracks, and their place was taken by the vigiles. When the letter from Tiberius was read out, it proved to be a bitter denunciation of his former friend. Macro had in the meantime gone to the praetorian barracks to keep the troops confined to their quarters, and the senate, bold now in the absence of the praetorians, condemned Sejanus, who was arrested, and strangled in prison. Macro was allowed to remain as sole praetorian Prefect, without a partner. The senate showered honours on him, which he declined – clearly it was through the exercise of real power that he got his pleasure. Macro up to this point appears as the archetypal loyal and reliable soldier, prepared to do his master's bidding. But he had shown a talent for masterminding a coup with cool and ruthless efficiency. This was a skill that he would bring to bear with great effect in support of Caligula some five years later. His involvement in Sejanus' downfall

brought home to him the key role that military force could have in settling political questions; it would provide a compelling precedent when Tiberius died with the succession issue unresolved.

There remained one final blow for Tiberius. Before committing suicide, Sejanus' divorced wife Apicata dropped a political and domestic bombshell, revealing in a letter that her husband had plotted with his mistress, Livilla, to kill Livilla's husband, Tiberius' son Drusus. Tiberius launched a thorough investigation and his worst suspicions about Drusus' death were confirmed. Livilla paid for her part in the plot with her life, starved to death by her mother Antonia, according to a story preserved in Dio.⁴⁶ It is very striking and surely significant that the ouster of Sejanus failed to bring about the release of Agrippina or of her son Drusus, suggesting strongly that Tiberius was convinced by overwhelming evidence of their guilt. Yet whatever his feelings might have been towards other members of the family the emperor showed no hostility towards Caligula. When he had earlier referred to the young man's *pietas* on his elevation to the priesthood, he may well have chosen this word in order to emphasise that, unlike his mother and brothers, Caligula was innocent of any involvement in murky conspiratorial dealings.⁴⁷

Caligula's feelings towards Tiberius were potentially more complex. He was now nineteen years old, fully capable of absorbing mentally what was going on around him. If his mind had been fed by his mother's denunciations of Tiberius and bitter complaints that her husband, and his father, had been cheated of the principate by Tiberius, he kept whatever emotions he felt to himself. But there are signs that from this point on Caligula began consciously to consolidate his position as the inevitable successor. He was abetted in these efforts by Macro. This need not of course indicate any special bond of affection between the two men. The new Prefect clearly recognised that Caligula's popularity as the son of Germanicus would in the end overwhelm any claim by Gemellus to the succession, and Caligula in turn courted the favour of Macro as the man whose military support could be crucial. According to Philo, Macro worked assiduously on Tiberius to promote his protégé, playing up Caligula as friendly and obedient, so devoted to Gemellus that he would be willing to give up his claim to the succession in the latter's favour. Much of this may well be the product of Philo's own imagination, but it is certainly not implausible.⁴⁸ At any rate a number of *treason* trials occurred during this period, some of them doubtless reflecting Macro's efforts to eliminate the opposition by playing on the widely felt desire for vengeance against Sejanus and his supporters. Sextius Paconianus, who, as noted above, had apparently helped Sejanus in his intrigues against Caligula, was brought to trial, and saved himself only by turning informer. Marcus Cotta Messalinus was accused in 32 of casting doubt on Caligula's masculinity and was saved only by the personal intervention of the emperor, his old friend. Sextus Vistilius, who made similar charges, was informed that he was no longer welcome to Tiberius; no trial was held, but he killed himself by opening his veins.⁴⁹ These were not the only ones to suffer. Tacitus speaks of treason charges brought against five senators of high rank. There may well have been a lingering suspicion that they had plotted

with Sejanus against Caligula. One of them committed suicide, but the others survived and went on to play a surprisingly disproportionate role in later politics. Lucius Annius Vinicianus became a close friend of Caligula's brother-in-law and enjoyed the imperial favour, then was possibly involved in Caligula's assassination. Gaius Appius Junius Silanus would serve as legate of Hispania Citerior and be married to the mother of Claudius' notorious wife Messalina, and be executed in AD 42 through Messalina's machinations. Another, Calvisius Sabinus, would become legate of Pannonia and forced by Caligula into suicide in 39, probably on suspicion of plotting rebellion.⁵⁰ Among other individuals who survived the aftermath of Sejanus' fall was Lentulus Gaetulicus, the commander in Upper Germany whose daughter had been betrothed to Sejanus' son. He was faced with prosecution in AD 34, but the case was dropped. His main protection was his control of powerful legions, a situation that would have major consequences for Caligula (Chapter 6).⁵¹

In this post-Sejanian period it seems hard to believe that Caligula did not resent Tiberius for the fact that his mother and surviving brother were still languishing in exile or prison. And for all the vagaries of his later period as emperor, it could be argued that this period in Capri is in some respects the strangest one of his life. His first instinct, of course, would have been to survive, and this would have required him to suppress any possible sense of moral outrage, and to subordinate everything to his own protection. He would have learned the need to be constantly on his guard, and the sources portray him as someone skilled at concealing his true feelings. We are told by Suetonius that while in Capri he ignored the destruction of his own family *incredibili dissimulatione* ('with remarkable pretence'). Dissimulation was also supposedly one of Tiberius' salient attributes, and Tacitus tells us that Caligula learned the art of deceit at the knees of his grandfather, and aped his mood and words, concealing his monstrous character beneath a spurious modesty: *immanem animum tegens subdola modestia*, giving rise to the *bon mot* of Passienus Crispus, that the world never knew a better slave or a worse master.⁵² Passienus' observation is especially interesting. Twice consul, and married twice to wives from the imperial family (the second time to Caligula's sister Agrippina), he clearly had a good insight into what was happening in court circles. Moreover, his witticism would have had little point among his contemporaries if it was not at least to some degree plausible. Plausibility is, of course, different from truth. And one might wonder just how Caligula was supposed to behave under the circumstances; as Winterling observes, forthright sincerity would almost certainly have cost Caligula his life.⁵³ At any rate he later presented himself in quite a different light, as one tormented by rage over the treatment of his family. He was most likely personally responsible for the story that, according to Suetonius, made its way into some accounts (*quidam auctores*), that his family's fate drove Caligula to plot Tiberius' murder, but that he was unable in the end to go through with it. He entered his bedroom with dagger in hand, but was overwhelmed with pity and threw the weapon down. Most implausibly Tiberius was apparently aware of what happened, but did nothing!⁵⁴ But at the time there was no hint of antipathy,

and in fact there seems to have been a curious bond between the two of them, perhaps from their shared scholarly interests. Tiberius took responsibility for the young man's education, and Josephus observes that Caligula was sufficiently inspired by Tiberius' intellectual achievements to apply himself to his own studies, gaining an outstanding education as a result.⁵⁵ In AD 39 Caligula delivered a damning speech to the senate, and it is noteworthy that on that occasion he used a rhetorical device to conjure up Tiberius engaging with him in a discussion about the quality of his speech.⁵⁶

Not everyone on Capri would have had Caligula's best interests at heart, and according to Suetonius there were some who urged him to complain, but he was shrewd enough not to pay them heed. Presumably the troublemakers were agents of Sejanus, during the first months of Caligula's stay, although it would be difficult to identify them among the men known to have been on the island. Tiberius took with him Cocceius Nerva, a senator with expertise in the knowledge of the law, Curtius Atticus, an equestrian with literary leanings, and a number of Greek scholars, the most famous being Thrasyllus, his astrologer.⁵⁷ They were visited later by the future emperor Servius Sulpicius Galba, and an unnamed man of consular rank who wrote *Annales*. The only person recorded on Capri about the same age as Caligula was Aulus Vitellius, also a future emperor. Quite possibly they were already friends at the time (Vitellius' father had been a visitor to Antonia's house), since they later enjoyed racing chariots together in Rome.⁵⁸ None of the above seems likely to have been intriguing against Caligula. Since in other situations Sejanus worked through bribed freedmen, it is possible that he had arranged a network among the household staff on the island, but there is no actual evidence of such a scheme.

Colourful stories would inevitably circulate about Caligula's time on the island. According to Suetonius, he was indulged by Tiberius in his chosen perversions, supposedly in the hope that it would somehow soothe his savage nature. He reputedly enjoyed watching torture, was given to sexual excesses and gluttony, and was obsessed by theatrical shows. Yet Philo, a strict moralist who spent time in Rome during Caligula's lifetime, insists that while Tiberius was alive Caligula's conduct was moderate and restrained. Nor does Seneca offer any stories of high living on Capri.⁵⁹ Moreover, the fates of Cotta Messalinus and Sextus Vistilius, combined with his expulsion of the notoriously perverted *spintriae* at the beginning of his reign, seem to suggest that Caligula if anything had an almost prudish attitude towards sex. The individuals known to be on the island, noted above, hardly seem like suitable companions in riotous living.⁶⁰ In any case Tiberius felt he was responsible enough in 33 to be appointed to the quaestorship, with a promise of advancement to the other offices five years before the statutory age.⁶¹ Various distinctions and minor offices were voted for him in Italy and the provinces. Some are recorded on coins minted by Roman colonies in Spain, which bear what are the first certain representations of Caligula. Unfortunately, as is often the case on colonial issues, there is no attempt at realism, and they are of little or no value as portraits.⁶²

It is ironical that these marks of distinction were conferred on Caligula in AD 33, the very year his mother and brother died. Just as rumours were circulating that Drusus was about to be reconciled to Tiberius, he was deliberately allowed to starve to death in his dungeon in the palace. The process stretched out over several days, the last spent in agony, as he ate even the stuffing from his mattress. Tiberius provided the horrified senate with a verbatim account of his words and actions, along with his final delirious abuse of the emperor. Drusus was denounced in the strongest terms and described as *infestum reipublicae* ('hostile to the state'), and also, perhaps with reference to his disloyalty towards his brother Nero, as *exitialis in suos* ('pernicious to his own family').⁶³ Why Tiberius should have chosen to regale the senate with this grisly record is unclear, but he may have wanted to provide a categorical demonstration that Drusus really was dead. Two years earlier, an impostor had appeared in Achaea and Asia, claiming to be the very same Drusus, and had gained a number of adherents. He was eventually tracked down by Poppaeus Sabinus, governor of Achaea and Macedonia, and the fraud exposed.⁶⁴ Scarcely had Rome digested news of the real Drusus' death, when reports reached the city that his mother Agrippina had died, on October 18, in the same year. Perhaps in a desperate gesture of solidarity with her late son, she had starved herself to death, a woman of stubborn spirit to the very end. In informing the senate, Tiberius claimed that the suicide was due to her grief over the fate of her lover Asinius Gallus. Certainly, the sources generally concede that Tiberius had no direct role in bringing about her death, and there seems even to have been an attempt to force-feed her.⁶⁵ As it happened, she died on October 18, the anniversary of Sejanus' death two years earlier, and in his report to the senators Tiberius dwelt on the coincidence. He also drew their attention to his clemency. This with a straight face; Agrippina, after all, had not been strangled or thrown down the Gemonian stairs, the proper fate of traitors. Tacitus reports the communication as a piece of grim irony, but if taken at its face value it once again suggests that there might have been evidence available to Tiberius that Agrippina had indeed been engaging in some kind of hostile secret activity.

This was not, however, a period of unremitting gloom. At some point, probably in 33, Tiberius crossed over to the mainland to be present in Antium for the marriage of Caligula and his first wife, Junia Claudia, daughter of Marcus Junius Silanus.⁶⁶ Caligula's father-in-law belonged to the Junii Silani, a family that prospered under the imperial system, whoever was emperor, and was linked to the Julians by marriage.⁶⁷ He was suffect consul in AD 15, and five years later interceded quite successfully with Tiberius on behalf of his brother Decimus, banished because of an affair with Augustus' granddaughter Julia (the Younger). Two years later he sought to strengthen his position with Tiberius even further by proposing that the Roman year be dated from the emperor's accession, instead of by the traditional system of the names of the consuls. There is no further mention of him for ten years, when he is grouped with others castigated by Tacitus for their servile behaviour towards Tiberius. Because of his rank in the senate he had, by the time of Tiberius' death, acquired the privilege of casting his vote

first, and Tiberius held him in such high regard that he refused to try any case on appeal from his decision; Syme has suggested that Silanus might even have been a Claudian, on his mother's side, with some kinship to the emperor.⁶⁸

The relative distinction of Caligula's bride is a clear sign of Tiberius' favour, and this stands in contrast to the unimpressive matches of his two unmarried sisters, announced in the same year. Agrippina was already betrothed, in 28, to Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, a man who enjoyed a distinguished lineage (he was the grandson of Mark Antony and Octavia) but achieved little in his own right and was described by Suetonius as detestable in every aspect of his life. Drusilla was married to Lucius Cassius Longinus in 33, member of an old plebeian noble family. He had similarly not achieved any personal distinction, and was known more for his affability than his energy. Livilla was given to Marcus Vinicius. Since he is to play an important role in Caligula's reign, some information on his background might be appropriate. His grandfather Marcus, an equestrian from Campania, had followed a distinguished military career and become a personal friend of Augustus (holding the consulship in 19 BC, the first of his family to do so). His descendants, however, barely lived up to this early promise of greatness. His son Lucius (consul AD 2) made no mark in the military sphere, although he did acquire a reputation as an orator and connoisseur of literature (he was an admirer of Ovid). Lucius' son, Marcus Vinicius, husband of Livilla, seems to have been of a rather quiet and retiring disposition, and may well have inherited his father's interest in literature, since he was on close terms with the historian Velleius Paterculus, who dedicated his work to him. He was consul in 30, and survived the fall of Sejanus unscathed. Like Cassius Longinus, he was a safe, but far from brilliant, match.⁶⁹ Also, in the same year, Julia, Tiberius' granddaughter, was married to Rubellius Blandus, grandson of a knight from Tibur, a marriage so undistinguished that it caused the household much distress. All of this opens up the possibility that Tiberius was seeking to ensure that there would be no serious rivals to complicate his plans for the succession.⁷⁰

Caligula's wife Junia probably joined him when he returned from Antium to Capri, to a situation of increasing intrigue. Macro could see that Caligula's star was in the ascendant, and sought to ingratiate himself with the young man and to press his case with Tiberius. He had no scruples about exploiting even personal tragedy. At some point Junia became pregnant; neither she nor the infant survived the birth.⁷¹ Macro's wife, Ennia Thrasylla, was called upon to fill the emotional gap.⁷² Little is known about Ennia. It has long been speculated that she was the granddaughter of Thrasyllus, the famous astrologer on whom Tiberius became so dependent.⁷³ If this identification is correct she may have been born about 15. The precise circumstances of the liaison between her and Caligula are obscure. Tacitus, followed essentially by Dio, may not be far off the mark in his claim that, after Junia's death, Macro, to curry favour with Caligula, induced his wife to have an affair with him, while Caligula was happy to go along with the scheme, recognising that Macro's support would be a very valuable asset. Suetonius gives Caligula the initiative, and claims that he undertook to marry Ennia if he became

emperor, swearing to it on oath, even confirming the promise with a written contract.⁷⁴ The scheme would come to haunt Macro. When Caligula later decided to be rid of him, he used the charge of pandering as a weapon against him.

On Capri, Caligula made a deep and lasting acquaintance with another individual, one who was to remain perhaps his only close and trusted friend throughout his reign. Julius Agrippa (often referred to incorrectly, but conveniently, as 'Herod' Agrippa), grandson of Herod the Great of Judea, was a man whose personality in some respects mirrored Caligula's own, in that he was brilliant and unpredictable, and much given to reckless extravagance. He was a remarkable individual, and his astonishing career is made to seem even more so since much of what is reported about him in Josephus' *Antiquities* seems to be based on a colourful and imaginative source, the romanticised lost *Life of Agrippa*, which much exaggerated his role in the great events of his time (by contrast he is never mentioned by Suetonius and only once, briefly, by Tacitus).⁷⁵ The truth about Agrippa is often difficult to discern, but it is clear that in two important respects he in fact differed considerably from Caligula: he possessed a highly developed sense of self-preservation and he was a very deft handler of people. His family background was, if anything, even more tragic and dramatic than Caligula's had been. His father Aristobulus was executed (along with Aristobulus' brother, Alexander) by his grandfather Herod the Great in 7 BC, when the hostility between Herod and his sons, and suspicions of treason, reached their final bloody climax. Agrippa was born in 11/10 BC, and not long after his father's death was taken to Rome by his mother Berenice (niece of Herod), to stay at the home of Antonia, Caligula's grandmother. Antonia was close to Berenice, and these personal ties were strengthened even further by the friendship between Berenice's mother, Salome (sister of Herod, not the famous Salome), and Augustus' wife Livia. Agrippa thus had the opportunity to mingle with the children of the imperial family and to establish connections that would serve him well. He made early contact with the future emperor Claudius, and was especially close to Drusus, Tiberius' son.

As he grew to manhood Agrippa became increasingly extravagant. He fell into serious debt in Rome, and his problems reached a climax in the autumn of AD 23, when Drusus died and Agrippa suddenly found himself cut off from the imperial circle. Judging it prudent to abandon the scene both of his youth and of his bad debts, he returned to his homeland, avoiding his relatives by burying himself away in a remote part of Idumea, the semi-desert area south of Judea. The wilds of Idumea proved considerably less to his taste than had been the cosmopolitan attractions of Rome. He grew highly despondent, even considered suicide, but was rescued from this drastic step by his brother-in-law (and half-uncle) Antipas, who had been appointed by Augustus as the local ruler, or tetrarch, of Galilee and Peraea, on his father Herod's death. Antipas founded a new capital city, on Hellenistic lines, at Tiberias, where he placed Agrippa in charge of its financial affairs.

The circumscribed life of a municipal civil servant seems to have proved distinctly unexciting, and Agrippa resented his brother-in-law's unpleasant habit

of casting his poverty in his teeth. We do not know how long he stayed in Tiberias, but by AD 32/3 he had moved to Syria. There the consequences of his old spendthrift ways caught up with him. The procurator of the imperial estate in Jamnia, Gaius Herennius Capito, tracked him down, and sought the recovery of money apparently owed to the imperial treasury. Agrippa made a hasty escape, reaching Rome in AD 36. En route, he stopped in Alexandria and borrowed a considerable sum from Alexander, the brother of Philo. In Italy he communicated with Tiberius in Capri, and much to his relief was invited to visit the emperor. He almost came to grief the day after he reached the island, with the arrival of a letter from Capito detailing the extent of his debt. Tiberius was determined to shun him, but he was saved by the timely intercession of Antonia, who provided Agrippa with the funds to cover his debts. Josephus says that she was motivated by his friendship with her son Claudius and by her affection for his mother Berenice, illustrating, yet again, the powerful nexus between Antony's daughter and the ruling dynasties of the East. However much embroidered these accounts may have been, Agrippa had clearly yet again fallen on his feet, and was restored to Tiberius' favour, and indeed so charming and diplomatic was he that the emperor supposedly asked him to take his grandson Gemellus under his wing.

Such a request seems implausible, and is probably derived from the romanticised tradition that attached itself to Agrippa, but he would in any case have been perceptive enough to recognise that the future lay elsewhere, and began to pay court to Caligula. He no doubt appreciated that where reckless spending was concerned, he and his new young friend were kindred spirits. Borrowing a million drachmae, he repaid Antonia's loan and shrewdly invested the remainder in currying Caligula's favour. Agrippa was now over forty-six years old, and the attention of the older and more worldly man, grandson of the great Herod, would doubtless have served to inflate whatever sense of self-importance Caligula was starting to acquire. Willrich has argued that Tiberius was determined to train Caligula as a constitutional ruler, free from Hellenistic influences. If that is so, Agrippa may well have served to undo much of the emperor's efforts. How much blame can fairly be attributed to him for Caligula's later conduct is difficult to determine, but at the very least it seems unlikely that he would have tried to ingratiate himself with the young emperor-in-waiting by promoting ideas of moderation and constitutional government.

Harmful or not, there can be no denying that Agrippa's influence was strong and lasting. Of all Caligula's earliest cronies, he was the only one whose counsel was still being followed at the very end. And that influence seems to have been generally beneficial. For all that, Agrippa did have a knack of bringing trouble onto his own head. He is said to have speculated indiscreetly with Caligula on the very strong likelihood of his becoming Tiberius' successor. It is unlikely that he was involved in direct political activities and he was probably doing no more than laying secure foundations for his personal future. The only weapons he needed were charm and a smooth tongue, and the incident reveals that he understood exactly where Caligula was most susceptible. Unfortunately, there was a witness.

When Agrippa's coachman Eutychus was later accused of stealing his master's clothes he offered evidence of his master's treasonable activities. In September 36, Tiberius, on a visit to Tusculum in the Alban hills, summoned Agrippa to his presence, and charged him with wishing the emperor's death. Those very sentiments were no doubt harboured by many others at the time, but Agrippa committed the cardinal error of indiscretion. He was imprisoned. The sentence proved not so harsh as he might have feared. No less than Antonia, we are led to believe, saw to it that he should enjoy considerable comforts, and procured these with the connivance of Macro.⁷⁶

In the meantime Tiberius must surely have given increasing thought to the issue of the succession.⁷⁷ His options were limited. Augustan precedent would impel him to look for someone from within the imperial house, and in any case to go outside it would open up the prospect of chaos and civil strife.⁷⁸ Claudius, brother of Germanicus and Tiberius' nephew, had the right pedigree but was considered mentally incompetent. He had been kept out of public life and had sought consolation in his scholarly studies, enlivened by drinking and gambling. Tiberius' choice would clearly have to be between his natural grandson, Gemellus, and his grandson by adoption, Caligula. His decision not to leave explicit instructions on the matter gave the literary sources more or less free rein to indulge in speculation, enlivened by what is, in essence little more than essays in mind reading.⁷⁹ Generally the notion is promoted that Tiberius was far from happy at the prospect of being succeeded by Caligula; at best, Caligula's eventual succession was supposedly regarded as an inevitable, but nonetheless appalling, prospect. Philo reports that Tiberius shrewdly saw through him and recognised that his erratic and unreliable temperament made him unsuitable for the task of government. He also claims that there were those who said that had Tiberius lived a little longer, he would have eliminated Caligula, and that only the constant reassurances of Macro held him back. Similarly, Suetonius says that Tiberius recognised Caligula's destructive powers and felt that he had reared a 'viper for the Roman people and a Phaethon for all the world' (Phaethon was the son of Apollo who came close to burning up the world in his father's chariot). Tacitus claims that Tiberius felt that Caligula would have all the faults of the cruel dictator Sulla but none of his better qualities. Above all else, Tiberius is said to have fretted over the future of Gemellus. He was, of course, the old emperor's natural rather than adopted grandson, and his grandfather would have felt a natural personal anxiety about his fate, one that went beyond the narrow dynastic issue. Suetonius claims that Tiberius had fostered the rise of Sejanus to secure the succession for Gemellus, whom he looked upon as a *nepotem... naturalem* ('natural grandson'), against the claim of Germanicus' sons. Tacitus reports him putting his arm around Gemellus and saying, implausibly, to Caligula, 'You will kill him and another will kill you', an anecdote repeated by Dio. Josephus has Tiberius faced with the inevitability of Caligula's succession and consequently suffering anguish because his own preference was for Gemellus, whose future seemed perilous.⁸⁰ But the sources speak also of Tiberius' reservations about Gemellus.

Dio reports the consolation that Tiberius drew from the conviction that Caligula's reign would be so disastrous that his own would look good by comparison, and adds that he suspected that Gemellus was illegitimate (the conduct of Gemellus' errant mother, Livilla, would have reinforced the suspicion). Suetonius also refers to suspected illegitimacy as the grounds for Tiberius' supposed plan to murder Gemellus along with Caligula, which contradicts Suetonius' other claims.⁸¹ None of these anecdotes throws any true light on the issue. They amount to little more than guesses, of varying plausibility, about what might have been going on in Tiberius' head.

There was, of course, no formal mechanism for the succession. Augustus' approach had been to associate Tiberius in the powers of his office and thus in a sense leave him in place on his own death. But neither young man, in Tiberius' rigid view of constitutional procedure, was yet old enough or experienced enough for this level of responsibility. From a strictly legal point of view, the only option open to Tiberius' was to appoint an heir to his estate, just like any other Roman. This he did in AD 35, but hardly in a manner that clarified the larger constitutional situation, since he bequeathed the estate jointly to Caligula and Gemellus. Did he thereby intend the principate to be held jointly? The lack of a precedent for such an arrangement does not necessarily, in itself, invalidate the notion.⁸² Dio does speak of his leaving the *autarchia* to Caligula and Gemellus, and Philo describes Gemellus as being bequeathed a 'share' of the rule.⁸³ But these sources are both concerned not so much with the constitutional issues as with the moral impropriety of Caligula's claim to be sole ruler. The main objection to the notion of joint rule is that while minor offices and honours were bestowed on Caligula during Tiberius' later years, nothing at all was granted to Gemellus, who was kept completely in the background, even to the extent that he had still not formally assumed the *toga virilis* by the time of Tiberius' death.⁸⁴

It is perhaps significant that the literary sources place great emphasis on Gemellus' youth. Tacitus seems to suggest that in the last months of Tiberius' life Gemellus (who was by then seventeen) had not yet reached puberty (*nondum pubertatem ingressus*). Dio, under the year 33, refers to him as a child (*paidion*). Philo describes him as just entering adolescence in 37. Unfortunately we know virtually nothing about Gemellus' personality or character. The only relevant detail is an anecdote of dubious value recorded by Philo, that when he was later handed a sword and instructed to commit suicide he asked where to place the weapon, which suggests a naïve innocence. Now, Gemellus and his twin brother were born late in AD 19 (the year of Germanicus' death). By the time of Tiberius' death he would thus have been seventeen, hardly a child. It may well be the case that he was slow for his age and had been sheltered from appearing in public. This could explain Tiberius' concern for his welfare after his own death, and could later have provided the senate with a justification for putting aside Tiberius' will. The comments of the sources may thus have their ultimate origins in his mental, rather than his chronological age.⁸⁵

It is certainly difficult to believe that Tiberius would have thought that there was any serious prospect of his being succeeded by Gemellus. His potential 'rival' was the choice of the army and the great mass of the people, both of Rome and, to judge from the later reaction, of the empire as a whole, and Tiberius could hardly have been unaware of the tremendous popularity that Caligula commanded as the son of Germanicus, to say nothing of the prestige he enjoyed by being a direct descendant of Augustus. The prospects for Gemellus' acceptance as co-ruler on Tiberius' death would have been remote at best. For all the scholarly theorising about a 'Gemellus party' in Rome, his only named supporter was Avillius Flaccus, Prefect of Egypt.⁸⁶ But since Flaccus had apparently been involved in the prosecution of Agrippina he might have felt that his future under Caligula would be precarious (as indeed it was), and he can hardly be considered representative of a large body of feeling. Why then did Tiberius name Gemellus in his will? Balsdon plausibly suggests that he wanted to avoid a repetition of the discontent that the senate had felt on his own accession over having its mind made up for it.⁸⁷ There is also the possibility that in making Gemellus Caligula's co-heir he had the vain hope that this could somehow protect his grandson.

Much energy has been expended on the question of what Tiberius intended, but the question is essentially moot. On Tiberius' death Caligula was accepted as the next princeps by the army, the senate and the people, apparently without question. Much of the credit for this rests with Macro, who worked at strengthening his position right to the very end of Tiberius' life. Macro's campaign showed no signs of abating. One of the trials in AD 37 offers an interesting insight into the small and largely muted senatorial opposition to Caligula's accession. A certain Albucilla was arraigned in that year for an act of impiety against Tiberius. Her lovers were associated in the indictment. These included the highly respected Lucius Arruntius. Although not from a distinguished background (his father's consulship in 22 BC was possibly the family's first), Arruntius was a man much admired not only for his wealth and learning, but also for his integrity, and Augustus, it is claimed, speculated that he had both the capacity and inclination to be his successor. He was a natural target for the enmity of both Tiberius and Sejanus, and it was speculated that when he became legate in Spain (Hispania Citerior), Tiberius was afraid to allow him to assume his command and for that reason made him govern the province *in absentia*. In 31 a charge of *maiestas* was brought against him but quashed. By 37 he had reportedly come to the conclusion that the death of Tiberius would mean the succession of Caligula, and would bring no improvement in the political situation. His attitude illustrates how secure Caligula's position was by now, even if this particular senator, unlike many of his fellows, could see through the glamour of his Germanican lineage. Arruntius acknowledged the virtual certainty of Caligula's succession; but he also was conscious that the pretender was barely more than a boy 'ignorant of all things or nourished by the worst' (*ignarum omnium aut pessimis innutritum*), as Tacitus reports, and would be under the control of the Prefect Macro, who was even more brutal than his predecessor Sejanus. If power had ruined Tiberius with *his* vast experience, what

chance was there for the inexperienced Caligula under the tutelage of Macro? Arruntius' concern over Macro's power, and his 'excessive influence' (*nimia potentia*) over Caligula, is reflected in Tacitus, who reports Tiberius' rebuke to the Prefect for 'forsaking the setting sun and turning to the rising sun'.⁸⁸ This assessment of Caligula is of great interest for what it tells us about his character and personality on the eve of his reign. Arruntius saw him as a mere boy, controlled by the evil power behind the throne, Macro. There is no suggestion, however, that he was mentally unstable. Indeed, the implication is that, under different circumstances, Arruntius might have held out hope for an enlightened reign.

About the beginning of March 37, Tiberius fell ill. He was on the mainland, in Campania, at the time. He fought his illness, putting on an appearance of cheerfulness and engaging in various physical activities. But his condition worsened when he caught a chill and was struck down by a pain in his side. He eventually retired to his fine villa at Misenum, built originally by the great republican general Marius, with its commanding view of the sea. There he continued his usual activities, with regular rounds of dinner parties and entertainments. Plans to go back to Capri were thwarted by stormy weather. He grew weaker and eventually took to his bed. Tacitus reports that when Tiberius' doctor Charicles (who seems to have been acting as Macro's agent) revealed to the Prefect that the emperor would last only two days more, Macro made hurried arrangements to set Caligula's succession in motion. He ensured the loyal support of the (unspecified) key figures in the entourage by speaking to them in person, *conloquūis inter praesentes*. The military commanders and provincial governors were given their instructions by messenger.⁸⁹

Tiberius died on March 16, AD 37, and his death gave rise to a host of rumours of foul play, but the speculative variations in the stories cast doubt on the whole notion of murder.⁹⁰ Dio reports that, as Caligula pretended to arrange Tiberius' coverlets, he suffocated him, with some help from Macro. Tacitus is more detailed, reporting that Tiberius did to all appearances die, but then while Caligula was already being congratulated, the old emperor showed sudden signs of revival, much to the consternation of everyone present. In Tacitus' report, however, it is Macro, not Caligula, who delivered the *coup de grâce*. Suetonius offers up a rich menu of theories in his *Lives*, both of Tiberius and of Caligula, that Caligula poisoned him, or starved him to death, or smothered him or strangled him. In the *Tiberius* (but not the *Caligula*) Suetonius also offers a much less sensational version of events, which he attributes to Seneca (the relevant passage is apparently now lost and it is not certain whether he means Seneca the famous philosopher, or his father). Seneca, according to Suetonius, suggested that the death was perfectly natural. He wrote that Tiberius felt his end approaching and took off his signet ring as if to give it to someone, but seemingly changed his mind. He called for his servants, and when they did not come, stood up. At this moment his strength failed him, and he fell dead near the couch. Thus, despite an apparently genuine reluctance to accept the principate in the first place, and a profound distaste for holding the office afterwards, it seems that in his final hours Tiberius could not bring himself to give it up.⁹¹

Notes

- 1 Tac. *Ann.* 2.84.1. For Gemellus as nickname for Tiberius Julius Caesar, see Jos. *AJ* 18.206. The baby princes were honoured in the provinces: *SEG* IV. 515: *IGR* III. 997, and their heads appeared on imperial coinage (*RIC*² 1.42).
- 2 Tac. *Ann.* 3.8–18; epigraphic evidence for events surrounding the trial survives in the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*, a highly important senatorial decree summarising the results of the investigation, with a *subscriptio* by Tiberius. The document has been much studied in the brief period since its original publication (Eck 1996). A special volume of the *American Journal of Philology* (Vol. 120.1, 1999) is devoted to it.
- 3 Tac. *Ann.* 3.29.5 says that Nero was made pontifex, but there is no inscriptional evidence for this, and there may be some confusion with his brother Drusus' pontificate (attested at *ILS* 185). Suet. *Cal.* 12.1 mistakenly calls Drusus an augur. *EJ* 96 indicates that Nero was *flamen Augustalis*; Nero was given the privilege of seeking the quaestorship five years before the legal age.
- 4 For the impact of Sejanus on the Roman senatorial class, see Velleius 2.127–8.
- 5 Tac. *Ann.* 4.2.4; Dio 57.19.7, 58.4.3.
- 6 Suet. *Claud.* 27.1; his name was Claudius Drusus.
- 7 Tac. *Ann.* 4.10; Dio 57.22.1–3.
- 8 At the beginning of AD 23, Drusus, on assuming the toga of manhood, had received the same honours as had been granted earlier to his brother Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 4.4.1; Suet. *Tib.* 54.1).
- 9 Tac. *Ann.* 4.17.
- 10 Tac. *Ann.* 4.52; Suet. *Tib.* 53.1.
- 11 Tac. *Ann.* 4.53.
- 12 Tac. *Ann.* 4.54.
- 13 Caligula would eventually join him there. At *Ann.* 6.20.1 Tacitus seems to suggest that Caligula went to Capri with Tiberius at the outset, which is clearly incorrect.
- 14 Tac. *Ann.* 4.60.5–6.
- 15 Velleius 2.130.4–5; Pliny NH 8.145; Tac. *Ann.* 4.67.6, 5.3.1; Suet. *Cal.* 10.1. Tacitus places the final move against Agrippina and Nero *after* Livia's death, which occurred in 29. But Suetonius says that following his mother's banishment (*ea relegata*) Caligula came under the care of Livia, and Pliny asserts that the trial of one of Agrippina's supporters, Titus Sabinus, which belongs to 28, came after the *causa Neronis* ('the case of Nero'). Velleius, moreover, implies very strongly that Livia's death occurred after Nero and Agrippina had fallen into disgrace. Meise 1969: 240 proposed the schema tentatively adopted here, that the final attack came in two phases, the first phase belonging to before 29, and the second, more serious, one following Livia's death in that year.
 Among modern treatments: Gardthausen 1918: 475; Gelzer 1918a: 511; Charlesworth 1922; 1934a: 635; Marsh 1931: 184–7; Rogers 1931: 160; 1935: 101, 1943: 57–9; Syme 1958c: I. 404–5, 405 n. 2; Koestermann 1963–8: II. 223, on *Ann.* V.3; Meise 1969: 240; Bauman 1992: 151; Lindsay 1993: 69; Hurley 1993: 27–28; Wardle 1994: 137–8; Levick 1999: 167–70; Seager 2005: 176–7; Deline 2015.
- 16 Sen. *Ira* 3.21.5; the villa was later destroyed by Caligula. Scott 1939: 462 suggests that Agrippina was held at Herculaneum temporarily when moved between various places of exile.
- 17 Suet. *Cal.* 10.1: Suetonius mentions only Caligula, but presumably because he is the focus of the biography, and the presence of the sisters in Livia's house can be assumed. We do not know the whereabouts of Drusus – he may have been on Capri with Tiberius; Livia had similarly brought up the father of the emperor Otho in her house, though while Augustus was alive, so not necessarily the same one (Suet. *Oth.* 1.1).

- 18 Suet. *Cal.* 16.3, 23.2; of course the payment of the legacies would hardly have made Caligula unpopular!
- 19 *CIL* 72.7264: *Iuliae Aug(ustae)*; Tamm 1963: 146–56; Lugli 1970: 167–74; Carettoni 1987: 775; Iacopi 1995: 130–2; Barrett 2002: 177–80; Coarelli 2007: 138–40; 2012: 441; paintings: Ling 1991: 37–8, 113, 142, 216; Bragantini and Voss 1982: 30–3. The house is generally assigned to Livia, but Julia the daughter of Titus has also been suggested as the owner.
- 20 Tac. *Ann.* 4.68–70; Dio 58.1.
- 21 Tac. *Ann.* 5.1; Suet. *Cal.* 10.1. Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.3 notes that after Livia's death Tiberius criticised the consul Fufius for courting her favour. Fufius was replaced as consul almost certainly by the end of June. On this basis we can place Livia's death in early 29; see Barrett 1999a: 630.
- 22 Tac. *Ann.* 5.3–5; dislike: Tac. *Ann.* 1.33.6, 2.43.7, 4.12.5.
- 23 Philo *Flacc.* 9; one of the accusers was said to be Avillius Flaccus, who was in 32 appointed Prefect of Egypt.
- 24 See Rogers 1931; Boddington 1963.
- 25 Tac. *Ann.* 6.25.1
- 26 Tac. *Ann.* 5.1.6; Suet. *Cal.* 10.1. Gelzer 1918a: 382 argues that the delivery of Livia's funeral oration already marked Caligula out as a successor. But such performances by young men were a tradition of the Julian house, as when Augustus gave the oration for his grandmother Julia, at the age of twelve (Suet. *Aug.* 8.1) or Tiberius for his father, at the age of nine (Suet. *Tib.* 6.4); *Guastella* 1992: 110.
- 27 Wilkinson 2005: 8 has Caligula and the Thracian princes together in the house of Livia. This is possible; we know that Livia looked after the children of others, such as Otho, the father of the future emperor (Suet. *Otho* 1.1). On the other hand Antonia is known for her eastern contacts, and took care of such as the young Herod Agrippa, which perhaps makes her the better candidate.
- 28 Tac. *Ann.* 11.3.1; *IGR* 4.145 (Smallwood 401).
- 29 The son was Aelius Gallus. There have been suggestions that Gaetulicus and Sejanus were related, through Sejanus' grandfather Gnaeus Lentulus Maluginensis; Cichorius 1904: 469–70; Stewart 1953: 73 n. 21, disproved by Sealey 1961: 103. Bird 1969: 77 plays down the connections between Gaetulicus and Sejanus.
- 30 Dio 58.3.8 notes that Tiberius eventually 'sent Drusus to Rome', and it is generally assumed that this must have been from Capri. It may be that Tacitus' comment (*Ann.* 6.20.1) that Caligula accompanied Tiberius to Capri at the outset resulted from confusion between the movements of Caligula and Drusus.
- 31 Suet. *Tib.* 54.2, *Cal.* 7; Dio 58.3.8. Drusus' accuser was a certain Cassius, who may have been the consul of that year, Gaius Cassius Longinus or his brother Lucius Cassius Longinus (who married Drusus' sister, Drusilla, three years later). There may, of course, be a third, unknown, Cassius.
- 32 Betrothal: Dio 58.3.9 (epitome) must be mistaken in saying that it was to Livilla's daughter Julia that Sejanus was betrothed; see Seager 2005: 271, n. 127; consulship: Suet. *Tib.* 65.1; *EJ* 50a, 358a; surrender of consulship: Suet. *Tib.* 26.2, *EJ* 42; proconsular power: Dio 58.7.4
- 33 Jos. *AJ* 18.182; Suet. *Tib.* 65.1; the idea is reflected in Tac. *Ann.* 6.8; Val. Max. 9.11 *ext.* 4; *EJ* 51, 52, 85.
- 34 Jos. *AJ* 18.182; Dio 66.14.1–2; on the possible exaggeration of Antonia's role, see Nicols 1975.
- 35 Tac. *Ann.* 6.3.4.
- 36 Suet. *Tib.* 61.1. Sealey 1961: 98 suggests that this autobiography may have been the source of the story about Antonia's secret letter to Tiberius.
- 37 Suet. *Tib.* 54.2, 61.1; Dio 58.8.4.

- 38 Suet. *Cal.* 10.1 says that it happened in his nineteenth year (*undevicesimo anno*), that is, after his eighteenth birthday; Hirschfield 1890: 368 adopts the reading that appears in the inferior manuscript tradition *inde vicesimo*, thus placing the event one year later.
- 39 Suet. *Tib.* 54.1, *Cal.* 10.1; Dio 59.2.2. Levick 1999: 175 argues that Caligula might have been taken to Capri for his own protection, in reaction to the letter from Antonia.
- 40 Willrich 1903: 100. Levick 1999: 176 suggests that speed was needed because of the threat posed by Sejanus.
- 41 Dio 58.23.1 Suet. *Tib.* 54.1 notes with reference to Drusus and Nero that he felt that honours should be conferred only on those with maturity and experience.
- 42 Suet. *Cal.* 12.1; Dio 58.7.4, 8.1. Caligula was an augur (a minor priestly official) after his accession, and appears as augur on local coins of 37 (Cohen I. 238.12), but there is no evidence that he held the position before then. Suetonius may be in error in suggesting that Caligula was marked out to succeed Drusus in that office. Drusus clearly held a pontificate (*ILS* 185) but Caligula may have succeeded Nero, rather than Drusus, in his pontificate (Tac. *Ann.* 3.29.3). Caligula's pontificate is recorded in *ILS* 189 (one of a pair) from Vienna Allobrogum. Dio's information on the date of Caligula's pontificate conflicts with that of Suetonius, who places it after his marriage to Junia.
- 43 Dio 58.8.2 notes that Sejanus was deterred from armed rebellion when he realised how popular the decision was.
- 44 Dio 58.9–16 on the downfall of Sejanus.
- 45 On Macro, see De Visscher 1957; 1964; 1966.
- 46 Tac. *Ann.* 4.11; Dio 58.11.6–7.
- 47 As suggested by Balsdon 1934b: 15.
- 48 Philo *Leg.* 35–8; it is possible that Philo was using source material that originated in the largely fictitious *Life of Agrippa*. Hurlet 2008: 102 notes that the backgrounds to the successions of Tiberius and Caligula were similar, in that in both cases a series of potential successors died beforehand. But the support of a powerful military figure like Macro makes Caligula's situation significantly different from Tiberius'.
- 49 Tac. *Ann.* 6.3.4, 6.5, 6.9.2–5. Cotta had said that Caligula was a person of *incertae virilitatis*, perhaps an ambiguous joke on his late assumption of the *toga virilis*.
- 50 The other two were Gaius Annius Pollio, father of Vinicianus, and Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, who committed suicide: Tac. *Ann.* 6.9.5–7, 29.4–6; see Stewart 1953: 73, Levick 1999: 202–3.
- 51 Tac. *Ann.* 6.30.
- 52 Tac. *Ann.* 6.20.1, providing the name of the author; Suet. *Cal.* 10.2 repeats the phrase without giving the author. It seems clear that Tacitus and Suetonius are using the same source here; see Lindsay 1993: 71; Hurley 1993: 30. Vout 2013: 72 observes that dissimulation became a stock attribute of the tyrant.
- 53 Winterling 2011: 41.
- 54 Suet. *Cal.* 12.3.
- 55 Jos. *AJ* 19.209; Willrich 1903: 101 believes that Tiberius, with his traditional Roman ideas, would have seen his role as a counterbalance to the influence of Hellenism.
- 56 Dio 59.16.4–7.
- 57 Tac. *Ann.* 4.58.1; Suet. *Cal.* 10.2; Curtius Atticus may be the Atticus addressed in Ovid *Pont.* 2.4, 7. He fell victim to Sejanus (Tac. *Ann.* 6.10.2).
- 58 Consular: Suet. *Tib.* 61.6. Syme 1958c: 277 identifies him as Servilius Nonianus; Galba: Tac. *Ann.* 6.20.3; Vitellius: Suet. *Vit.* 3.2; Dio 58.3.3 suggests that Asinius Gallus (he would now have been in his seventies) was cruelly entertained on Capri on the day he was condemned by the senate.
- 59 Philo *Leg.* 14; Suet. *Cal.* 11.
- 60 D'Arms 1970: 86–7; Houston 1985: 185–6; Adams 2007: 125–35 investigates the possible practices that can be deduced from the plan of the Villa Iovis, the grandest of Tiberius' villas on Capri.

- 61 Dio 58.23.1 describes his quaestorship as ‘not among those who were first’. Levick 1999: 291, n. 31 explains that this does not mean an inferior quaestorship, but that he was designated to hold office not in the following year but in the one after that; Sumner 1967: 425 suggests that he was designated suffect for AD 33.
- 62 He held a duumvirate at Caesaraugusta in Spain (*RPC* 362–4) and Pompeii (*ILS* 6396, with *CIL* 10.902, dated to 34), and was quinquennalis at Carthago Nova, also in Spain (*RPC* 182–4), and Pompeii (*ILS* 6397).
- 63 Tac. *Ann.* 6.24.1; Suet. *Tib.* 54.2, 61.1; Dio 58.22.4, 25.4.
- 64 Tac. *Ann.* 5.10; Dio 58.25.1; this was not an unusual phenomenon in the Roman world, most famously in the case of the pseudo-Neros who emerged after that emperor’s death.
- 65 Dio 58.22.4 implicates Tiberius. Suet. *Tib.* 53.2, however, says that Agrippina’s death was suicide, and Tac. *Ann.* 6.25.1 accepts the suicide version after some hesitation.
- 66 Tac. *Ann.* 6.20.1 provides a date of 33; Dio 58.25.2 provides the location, Antium, and the presence of Tiberius, but dates the marriage to 35; Tacitus has Tiberius on the mainland in 33 (*Ann.* 6.1.1), but Hurley 1993: 32 suggests that Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.28.2, 39.2) also records another visit by Tiberius to the mainland in 35, thus possibly reinforcing Dio’s date. Suet. *Cal.* 12.1 gives the bride’s name as Junia Claudilla, and puts the marriage before Caligula’s priesthood, in 31; Balsdon 1934b: 15; Tuplin 1987: 799 suggest a confusion between dates of marriage and betrothal; see Syme 1983; Wardle 1994: 143; 1998.
- 67 Marcus Junius Silanus Torquatus married Amelia Lepida, great-granddaughter of Augustus (granddaughter of Julia).
- 68 Tac. *Ann.* 3.24.1, 57.2, 6.2.2; Dio 59.8.5–6; Syme: 1986: 195, stemmata XII and XIII.
- 69 Tac. *Ann.* 6.15.1–2: Tacitus calls Vinicius *mitis ingenio* ‘gentle by nature’, echoed by Dio 60.27.4; Syme 1982: 63–4 on the marriages; Levick 1999: 208.
- 70 Tac. *Ann.* 6.27.1.
- 71 Suet. *Cal.* 12.2; Dio 59.8.7 is clearly in error in stating that Caligula divorced Junia after his accession; see Wardle 1998: 110.
- 72 *PIR*2 E 65. Suet. *Cal.* 12.2 gives the name Ennia Naevia, a variant of Ennia Naevi (emendation has been suggested), the more conventional form of referring to a married woman with the genitive of her husband’s name.
- 73 Granddaughter of Thrasyllus: Cichorius 1922: 391; Cramer 1954: 107.
- 74 Tac. *Ann.* 6.45.5; Suet. *Cal.* 12.2; Dio 58.28.4; Philo *Leg.* 39, 61 places the blame on Ennia, suggesting that she deceived Macro, who had no idea of the affair; Guastella 1992: 117–18; Hurley 1993: 34; Winterling 2011: 49 doubts that Macro would have initiated the affair, since he was already so powerful that Caligula would need his backing in any case. In reality Caligula and Macro both needed one another. The sources are probably only speculating on how the affair began and evolved.
- 75 Agrippa’s *nomen* ‘Julius’ is given in *IG* III2, 3449. There is no record of his *praenomen*, but we do know that his son was called Marcus: *SEG* 7, 216, 217 (cf. *IGR* 3.1089), a name that he may have adopted from his father; see Smallwood 1976: 187. Schwartz 1990 argues that Josephus’ main sources for Agrippa in the *Antiquities* was a *Life of Agrippa* written maybe some forty years after his death showing ‘unflinching sympathy for him and emphasis on his central role in all that takes place around him’ (p. 36). Thus much of what Josephus says about Agrippa in the *Antiquities* is of dubious historical value, serving primarily to add to his picaresque image; Tacitus: *Annals* 12.23.1.
- 76 Jos. *AJ* 18.143, 147–50, 165–204; Willrich 1903: 101; Schwartz 1990: 54.
- 77 See Landolfi 2008.
- 78 See Timpe 1962: 60–1. As Gagé 1931: 11 pointed out, ‘Une loi tacite... ait régulièrement dévolué l’empire au représentant le plus proche ou le plus qualifié du sang d’Auguste’.

- 79 Meise 1969: 50–5 argues that speculation about Tiberius' intentions arose from the claims put forward by the 'Gemellus Party' and the 'Caligula Party' in the period before Gemellus' death, with Josephus retailing the views of the former; Dio of the latter.
- 80 Philo *Leg.* 24, 33–4, *Flacc.* 12; Jos. *AJ.* 18.214–15; Tac. *Ann.* 6.46.9; Suet. *Cal.* 11, 19.3; Dio 58.23.3; Innocenti Pierini (1985) believes that an allusion is made to the Phaethon comment in Sen. *Polyb.* 17.3, where it is suggested that Caligula passed on to Claudius an empire that had been scorched; Woods 2007a suggests that in likening Caligula to a snake he was depicting him as a potential victim. Suet. *Tib.* 72.2 records that Tiberius had a pet snake that was eaten by ants.
- 81 Suet. *Tib.* 62.3; Dio 58.23.2; Eutropius 7.12 observes that Caligula was so evil he wiped away all the crimes of Tiberius.
- 82 Suet. *Tib.* 76, *Cal.* 14.1. The notion of a dual principate does have its supporters, see: Kornemann 1930: 37; Gesche 1971: 55, 65; Levick 1999: 209–10.
- 83 Dio 59.1.1; Philo *Leg.* 23, *Flacc.* 10.
- 84 Levick 1999: 209–10 explains this as due to Tiberius' formalism and the belief that he would live long enough for Gemellus to reach office in due course (Suet. *Tib.* 62.3; Dio 58.27.3). She suggests that Gemellus held a pontificate, citing Espérandieu 1929: 618. But the attribution of this inscription to Gemellus is far from certain, and in its original publication Thiers 1912: 84 assigned it to Claudius.
- 85 Philo *Leg.* 23, 30–1; Tac. *Ann.* 6.46.1 (he may have meant only that he had not yet attained the *toga virilis*); Dio 58.23.2. Tac. *Ann.* 2.84 is quite specific about the date of Gemellus' birth and even notes that people saw the tragic irony of the happiness of one family coinciding with the loss of the other. Hirschfield 1890: 363–73 argues that Tacitus is in error and that Gemellus and his twin must have been born after AD 20, but that would not affect materially the thesis proposed here.
- 86 Philo *Flacc.* 9; Suet. *Cal.* 13 stressed Caligula's widespread support.
- 87 Baldson 1934b: 16–18; see also Timpe 1962: 58.
- 88 Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.1–2, 6.7.1, 45.5, 47.2–4, 48.3–5, *Hist.* 2.65.2; Suet. *Tib.* 63.2; Dio 58.27.4 adds that Arruntius said that he could not in his old age become a slave of a new master.
- 89 Tac. *Ann.* 6.50.6; P Ryl. II. 141 indicates that news of Caligula's accession had reached Egypt by no later than April 27.
- 90 The date is provided by the *Fasti* of Ostia (*EJ* 43); Tac. *Ann.* 6.50.3; Suet. *Tib.* 73.1; Dio 58.28.5 mistakenly dates the death to March 26.
- 91 Tac. *Ann.* 6.50.9; Suet. *Tib.* 73.2, *Cal.* 12.2; Philo *Leg.* 25 also implies that he believed that Tiberius died naturally.

PRIVATE PURSUITS

Before he became emperor in AD 37 Caligula had lived well out of the public view, and, as a consequence, at the time of his accession very little would have been known about him. By the time he died, some four years later, he had made a searing impression that the passage of centuries has failed to obliterate. To give some flesh and blood to the essentially political portrait that will emerge in subsequent chapters, it may be useful at this point to pause to look at Caligula the private man, and focus on his personal idiosyncrasies and private interests. The image of the private Caligula is vivid, yet paradoxically at the same time it lacks sharp definition, since much of the colourful information that contributes to it derives from anecdotal material of dubious reliability. In reality the sources tell us less about the real Caligula than about the generally outrageous portrayal that took shape in the imagination of succeeding generations. Of course what seems fantastic may not necessarily, or at least not always, be fantasy. Recent history is replete with well-documented individuals whose behaviour may seem unbelievably outrageous but has proved on close inspection to be, in fact, merely outrageous.

We have information about Caligula's physical appearance, which both Seneca and Suetonius describe in vivid detail. Seneca's account, at least, must come reasonably close to the truth, since he was writing for people who often would have known at first-hand what the emperor looked like. He tells us that Caligula had a pale complexion, had started to go bald, had thin legs, and very large feet (the thin legs presumably inherited from his father, Germanicus). These features receive some confirmation from Suetonius, who adds that he had a large ill-proportioned body, and a broad forehead and hollow eyes ([Figure 3.1](#)). Pliny also speaks of his large frame, jocularly commenting that he provided shade for his guests at a picnic, while Suetonius' 'hollow eyes' possibly echoes Pliny's reference to a 'fixed gaze' (*[oculi] rigentes*). Caligula was supposedly so sensitive about his baldness that he would not allow himself to be viewed from above, objected to hearing the word 'goat' because it was a particularly hairy animal, made any man with a fine head of hair shave it off, and even, if we are to believe Seneca, imprisoned and eventually executed a young man out of jealousy over his elegant hair. These



Figure 3.1 Statue of Caligula, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond. Arthur and Margaret Glasgow Fund (photo: Travis Fullerton. ©Virginia Museum of Fine Arts)

physical descriptions, possibly even the extreme sensitivity to baldness in one so young, can probably be taken more or less at face value. But Seneca and Suetonius also describe him as physically repellent, Suetonius adding that he used to practise before a mirror to make himself look more fearsome, and Seneca asserting that his expression was so fiendish that it was a form of torture. These observations are essentially value judgements, and can be surely be dismissed. It has been observed that Suetonius, unlike Plutarch, does not offer his physical descriptions with reference to statues, no doubt because they did not necessarily conform to reality.¹ Ancient physiognomists, and no doubt the general public, adhered to a firm belief that a person's outward appearance was a key to character, that there was a clear relationship between what individuals looked like and how they behaved.² The rapturous reception that Caligula received from the populace on his first journey to Rome, and the near adulation of the senate, would have been unthinkable had his appearance excited either ridicule or revulsion.



Figure 3.2 Caligula as (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

The most reliable source of evidence for Caligula's appearance is his coinage, the most useful coins for our purpose being the large bronzes, especially the sestertii, whose field offered the engraver scope for detail and individualisation. The only certain pre-accession portraits are on the colonial issues of Carthago Nova in Spain, unfortunately with little apparent attempt at realism.³ The official coinage of Rome generally sought to portray genuine likenesses, certainly from Claudius on. The coin portraits of Augustus and Tiberius are highly idealised; Caligula's seem to occupy a transitional stage. There was certainly some degree of idealisation, especially in the provision of a rich head of hair, but the heads have individual features, the most noticeable and consistent being the elongated forehead (validating Suetonius), a somewhat bulbous nose, a slightly pointed chin, and a mouth with a retracted lower lip (Figures 3.2 and 3.3).

In the first six months of his reign Caligula behaved with commendable temperance and modesty. But as the reign progressed, and his true character and inclinations were given free rein, it became apparent that he was a young man with a taste for the exotic and the outrageous, not afraid to cause offence among what Dio calls the *euphrones*, the sober minded, who took umbrage at his excesses. As Suetonius comments, he would claim that there was nothing in his own character that he admired more than his *adiatrepsia*, a Greek word, undocumented elsewhere and probably Caligula's own coinage, hence difficult to translate. It is often taken in the sense of 'shamelessness', but the root *trep-* conveys the notion of 'turn', and the initial privative 'a' makes it negative, thus something closer to 'unturnability' or 'intransigence', 'stubbornness'.⁴ It may seem strange that anyone should see this as a source of pride, but the claim is in fact eerily reminiscent of Margaret Thatcher's famous 'The lady's not for turning.' Interestingly, Tacitus claims the opposite about him, saying that he had an indecisive temperament and was quick to change his mind.⁵

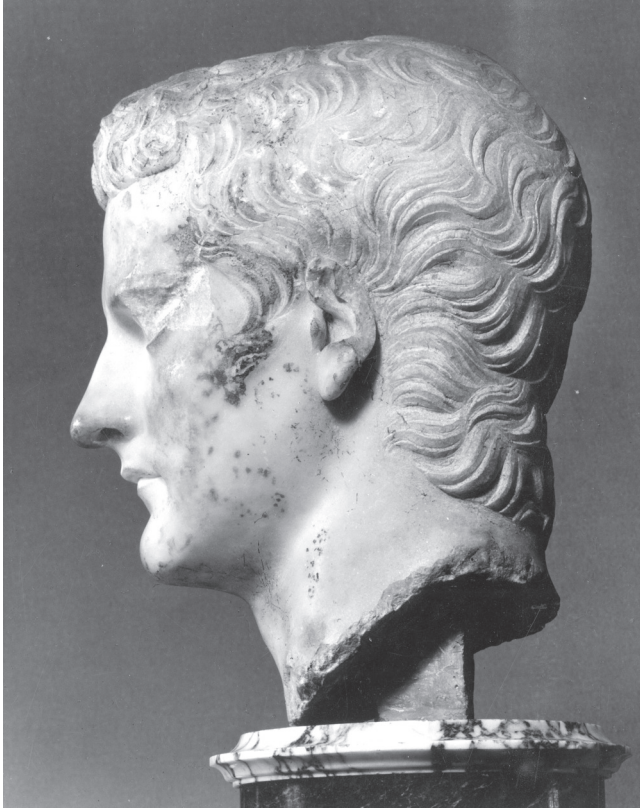


Figure 3.3 Head of Caligula, Schloss Fasanerie, Fulda

While Caligula may not in fact have defined himself as ‘shameless’, shameless he certainly was, and this shamelessness manifested itself in a wide variety of ways. At a basic level it found an outlet in his apparent taste in exotic clothing. As a child he used to dress up as a soldier, and in later life he never lost his love of impersonation, imitating Alexander the Great, or a *triumphator*, or a variety of both gods and goddesses. Even when he dressed as himself, as it were, he would, according to Suetonius, eschew the traditional sobriety of dignified Roman garb and appear in public in embroidered cloaks, covered in precious stones, or long-sleeved tunics and bracelets, with a variety of different kinds of exotic footwear.⁶

For his entertainments Caligula constantly sought out the different or novel. He supposedly invented new sorts of baths, where he could soak in perfumed oils. He devised bizarre and unnatural foods, and could compete with Trimalchio in the way he presented them to his guests – he was said to have laid out loaves and meats inside gold leaf. He is also reputed to have drunk pearls melted in vinegar. Given time the acid in vinegar will melt the calcium in the pearls, and in antiquity this was the ultimate test of extravagant living – Cleopatra is said to have melted

one of the finest pearls in existence on a bet with Antony about how expensive a meal she could eat.⁷ The settings for Caligula's entertainments were equally novel. He owned several luxury villas, in common with a number of wealthy upper-class Romans of his day. The sources tend not to allude to the actual physical buildings, they are simply taken for granted. Seneca specifically mentions his home in the Alban Hills, possibly at Velitrae, the setting for the extravagant picnic described below. In the *Ager Vaticanus*, on the right bank of the Tiber, technically outside the actual city of Rome, Caligula's mother, Agrippina, or her husband, Germanicus, laid out gardens, between the *mons Vaticanus* and the river. The estate eventually passed down to Caligula, and it was in its grounds that Philo's embassy was greeted cordially by the emperor at their first meeting in AD 40. Seneca speaks of architectural structures there, referring to a covered passage that separated a portico from the river bank.⁸ In addition, Philo mentions his grand residence on the Esquiline in Rome and his fine homes in the neighbourhood of Puteoli.⁹ But we can be sure that he had villas in numerous other places throughout Italy and perhaps beyond, and when strolling around the grounds of his Vatican estate, or travelling to a beauty spot like Mevania, or sailing from the island of Astura to Antium, he would almost certainly have stayed in commodious villas of his own in all those locations.¹⁰ When life indoors began to pall there were ships so extravagantly constructed that they contained baths and fruit trees. The two famous vessels that survived in Lake Nemi illustrate the kind of opulence one could expect, and may well have belonged to Caligula (Chapter 11). Those not inclined towards aquatic diversions could join one of his picnics, like that held at Velitrae, described by Pliny, organised in a kind of tree house in the branches of an enormous plane tree, large enough to accommodate fifteen guests and their attendants at one sitting.¹¹

In his personal pastimes, Caligula's enthusiasms were essentially those of the common man. He had a passion for gambling. He even played when he was on his northern expedition in Gaul, and, according to Seneca, when he went off to his Alban villa after the death of Drusilla it was to seek solace in gambling. Nor was he above a little cheating to ensure a win.¹² He enjoyed good eating and drinking, and one scholar explains his erratic behaviour as the consequence of alcoholic intoxication, attributing his fainting fits to alcohol rather than to epilepsy. There is no solid evidence, however, that he drank to excess. To some extent he did become, along with Nero and Vitellius, a byword for riotous living, but that reputation was probably part of a stereotype.¹³ He was also, according to the sources, a man with an enormous sexual passion. The targets of that passion varied. At dinner parties he would reputedly select the wives of guests during the course of the meal, have his pleasure, then regale the company with an account of their performance. This seems to have been a standard charge to hurl at one's enemies. Antony claims that Octavian similarly took off the wife of a former consul at a dinner party and brought her back with her hair dishevelled and her ears glowing. Some of his supposed mistresses are known: Ennia (the wife of the Prefect Macro), Nymphidia (the daughter of his freedman Callistus), the wife of the senator Valerius Asiaticus

and the concubine Pyralis. To these we must add his male partners: various hostages, the actor Mnester, his brother-in-law Marcus Lepidus, and Valerius Catullus, with whom he is supposed to have had a particularly vigorous session.¹⁴ Finally, we must not forget his sisters, all of whom supposedly shared his bed. Balancing these tales of sexual dynamism, however, there is the story that his last wife supposedly had to supply him with aphrodisiacs. Moreover he was so narrow-minded in his youth (clearly less so later) that attacks on his masculinity, before he became emperor, by individuals like Marcus Cotta Messalinus and Sextus Vistellius led to charges of treason (*maiestas*). On his accession he prudishly banished the *spintriae*, sexual perverts, and reputedly had to be restrained from drowning them. He was also supposed to have burned the author of an Atellan farce for a *double entendre*. These last claims may of course originate from his macabre humour, but they would lose their force if they did not to some degree reflect his reputation among his contemporaries. We have a relatively detailed account of only one of his marriages, to his last wife Caesonia, and the sources all acknowledge genuine affection for her, and a conduct both uxorious and monogamous.¹⁵

Caligula was also addicted to those peculiarly Roman forms of entertainment, generally described as *spectacula*. There were technically three kinds. The least expensive were the *ludi scaenici*, stage plays in the broadest sense of the word. On a more ambitious scale were the *ludi ciircenses*, whose main event was horse racing (which could be interspersed with other forms of entertainment). This was the most popular of the *spectacula* during the republic until replaced by the *munera gladiatoria*, the gladiatorial contests, which in the imperial period would be presented on the same days as animal fights. One of the most famous ancient episodes from the arena is the story of Androcles and the lion, which supposedly took place while Caligula was presiding.¹⁶

He gave many gladiatorial shows, in the amphitheatre of Taurus and in the Saepta Julia, a structure erected under Augustus and originally intended as a venue where the popular assemblies could cast votes. These shows were on a grand scale. There had in the past been limitations on the number of gladiators allowed in any one presentation (restricted to sixty pairs under Augustus), but with the approval of the senate he lifted the restrictions. Gladiators as a profession were much favoured by him. He often gave them money, and even took some with him when he went north on campaign in AD 39. He was a partisan of the *parmularii*, with their small round shields, and was an opponent of the rival *murmillones*, armed with the larger oblong versions. According to Pliny he had a Thracian in his own school by the name of Studiosus ('Keen'), who had the advantage of a right arm that was longer than the left. He also supposedly owned a team of twenty gladiators, two of whom had trained themselves not to blink and were as a consequence unbeatable. He reputedly took part in gladiatorial contests himself, without taking any risk, of course. To be his partner might prove a dubious honour – it is claimed that when practising with wooden swords with a gladiator from the training school, Caligula ran his opponent through with a real one. Prominent citizens took part in the contests, reputedly forced to do so, but very possibly voluntarily. Caligula

also found that gladiatorial contests could be a lucrative source of income. He would sell the survivors of the games at auction, preferably to the praetors (who had responsibility for organising the shows), forcing up the bids himself, while others pushed up the prices by joining in, hoping thus to ingratiate themselves with him. Gladiatorial shows appealed to a particularly brutal side of human nature, but Caligula seems to have been no worse than his contemporaries, and on one occasion even berated spectators who enjoyed the spectacle of a particularly gory episode, when five *retiarii*, men armed with nets and tridents, had yielded, supposedly in no position to continue fighting, and then one of them had snatched up his trident and slaughtered his opponents.¹⁷

Caligula's real passion, however, was for horse racing, a passion he shared with a large segment of the population.¹⁸ During the republic, magistrates made use of the established stables, which acquired their own followers and were known by the colours worn by their drivers. Originally there were only Reds and Whites. Early in the first century the Greens and Blues appeared, eventually to dominate the others. Julius Caesar often attended the races but took little real interest in the events, preferring to spend his time there working on documents. He was much criticised for his diffidence and like modern politicians who feel a need to feign a passion for soccer or baseball, later emperors found it politic to make a public show of personal interest in popular pastimes. Caligula's obsession with racing does, however, seem to spring from a genuine enthusiasm and not merely from a desire to swim with the tide or curry public favour. He spent enormous sums on horses, and had his own track, the *Gaianum*, on his Vatican estate (see [Chapter 11](#)). One of his fellow drivers there was the future emperor Vitellius, who suffered a spill when driving with the emperor, leaving him with a permanent limp. Although the factions did not yet command the degree of fanaticism that would later lead to riots and bloodbaths, there was certainly a lively partisanship. Caligula was personally devoted to the Greens, and supposedly poisoned the horses and charioteers of the rival factions (Nero too was a Greens enthusiast and wore a green tunic when driving; Vitellius by contrast was said to have executed opponents of the Blues). He would dine at the Greens stable and would shower their drivers with gifts. One of them, Eutychus, received two million sesterces and was allowed the use of praetorians to build stables for him. Caligula's favourite horse, the famous Incitatus, was reputedly provided with a fine stable decorated with marble and ivory and wore a fine jewelled collar. Before races soldiers were posted to keep the area quiet. Many stories were spread about Incitatus, originating most likely from Caligula's own humorous quips. The beast was supposedly invited to banquets. There were even rumours that Caligula intended to make him consul, or a priest (see [Chapter 14](#)).¹⁹

The general public expected their emperor to be a devotee of the races, and would not have been unhappy about the contrast between Caligula and Tiberius. It is interesting that when Suetonius records games in the circus where sand was mixed with red and green and where senators drove the chariots, he places this among Caligula's positive achievements. Senators were in fact forbidden from

appearing in regular circus games, but this occasion is presented as a piece of harmless horseplay (in the figurative sense).²⁰ The frequency of races increased. Under Julius Caesar the normal number had been ten to twelve a day. Caligula raised this, so that, by AD 37, at the games for the dedication of the Temple of Augustus, there were twenty races on the first day and forty on the second. By the end of his reign the regular number was twenty-four. Moreover they lasted a long time; Suetonius claims that his races in the circus, interspersed with various entertainments, were day-long events. The number of festivals when such races would be exhibited also increased. Circus games were instituted in honour of his mother Agrippina in 37, and his sister Drusilla's birthday was celebrated in 39 with two days of horse racing, athletic contests, and the slaying of animals. In the following year, Tiberius' birthday also was celebrated by two days of horse races.²¹ One might add that for all Caligula's interest, and participation, in racing, there is no evidence that he enjoyed physical exertion. Unusually for his day and social class, he could not swim.²²

Caligula also had a passion for the stage and put on an endless series of *ludi scaenici*, theatrical performances, associated with the celebration of public games, some of them at night, when he would light up the whole city. He loved the company of actors. On the grounds that they were a threat to public order Tiberius had banished a number of them from the city, and one of Caligula's very first measures was to recall them. He lavished money on them and was constantly in their company, taking them even on his planned campaign against Britain and Germany in AD 39. His very last act before his death was to engage in congenial conversation with a troupe of visiting performers. Two favourites stand out. Apelles, the most famous actor of the day, was his constant companion. The pantomime Mnester was said to have been his lover. Caligula looked upon the theatre as a serious activity. He took a dim view of people leaving or arriving in the middle of a performance, and, to discourage excuses about not being able to attend, postponed lawsuits and suspended public mourning. As a token of his reputed commitment, if anyone in the audience made the slightest noise while his favourite Mnester was performing, according to Suetonius, Caligula would drag him from his seat and whip him with his own hand. When a knight created a disturbance he was reputedly told to go to the court of King Ptolemy of Mauretania on a fool's errand. As with the races and gladiatorial shows, Caligula was no passive observer. Dio claimed that he gave public performances as a pantomime, and as a tragic actor. On Capri, amidst various debaucheries, he would reputedly disguise himself in a wig and long robe, and devote himself to dancing and singing. Even after he became emperor he would join in the songs and the dances. One of the most bizarre stories told about him is that on one occasion he summoned leading men from the senate at the dead of night, pretending he had some business to discuss, merely to treat them to an impromptu dance. These anecdotes are, however, difficult to reconcile with Suetonius' observation that on the day of his death Caligula was preparing for his very first appearance on the stage.²³

Some of Caligula's interests redeem him to some degree. He was clearly a man of considerable intellectual ability, although allowance must be made for the usual rhetorical embroidering by the ancient sources, and his mental talents may have been exaggerated to emphasise the contrast between his good and evil sides. In his early childhood he would have had before him the example of his father Germanicus, noted as an orator and man of letters.²⁴ Germanicus was the author of a number of literary works, ranging from an epigram composed to commemorate the entombment of a horse of Augustus to the still extant version of Aratus' *Phaenomena* (some doubt the attribution) and Greek comedies, one of which may well have been performed annually in the reign of Claudius. Ovid dedicated his *Fasti* to him, and makes flattering remarks on occasion (of course Ovid might have hoped for a good word to recall him from exile).²⁵ But Germanicus could have provided Caligula little in the way of formal training – he died when his son was only seven. We know that as a child Caligula made some sort of speech to the people of Assos, and delivered the funeral oration for Livia in 29. Beyond this we have no details of his formal education until he moved to Capri at the age of nineteen. Tiberius, under whose guidance he was placed, was deeply committed to liberal studies in both Latin and Greek. Indeed, he seems to have felt truly comfortable only in the company of scholars, and his early 'exile' in Rhodes was prompted in part by the desire to attend the schools of the philosophers. Many of the people in his company on Capri were men of letters. He was very fond of relaxed intellectual gatherings, where he would test his companions on mythology and literary quotations. On one occasion he was much offended when he discovered that the scholar Seleucus cheated by finding out from one of Tiberius' slaves what his master was reading.²⁶ Caligula may well have found such company very much to his liking. Josephus testifies to his natural aptitude for learning, and how, inspired by Tiberius, he accomplished great things in this sphere, seeking out the company of people who shared his interest in the higher things of the mind. As a consequence of this training he became greatly skilled in the use of both Greek and Latin. He developed a name as one of the best orators of his day, especially good at impromptu speech, and was even supposed to have written a book on the subject. Tacitus concedes that although his mind was disturbed (*turbata*) this did not affect his 'power of speech' (*vis dicendi*). He enjoyed the challenge of writing rebuttals of successful speeches, and of composing the defences and prosecutions of important individuals in the senate, arranging special invitations for the equestrians to come and hear him. When he spent the winter of 39/40 in Gaul he held contests in Latin and Greek oratory, where losers were supposedly obliged to erase their texts with their tongues (which they could avoid by opting to be thrown into a local river).²⁷ Dio has preserved the outline of, and some quotations from, one of Caligula's important speeches, the declaration in 39 before the senate of his intention to restore the trials for treason (*maiestas*). It seems well organised and logical, with the standard rhetorical devices, such as calling upon the dead Tiberius to address him, just as Cicero calls upon Appius Claudius in his *pro Caelio*.²⁸

Suetonius claims that other than his passion for oratory Caligula showed little interest in scholarly learning (*eruditio*). This is not easily reconciled with the observations of Josephus noted above. Josephus is admittedly not noted for his reliability, especially outside the realm of purely Jewish matters, but Suetonius' claim is to some degree belied also by Caligula's apparent interest in literary debates. He is supposed to have considered destroying the works of Homer, claiming the same right as Plato, who excluded him from his ideal state for misrepresenting the gods. He threatened to remove the busts of Vergil and Livy from the public libraries, on the grounds that the former had no talent, and the latter was a wordy and shoddy historian. But he was not unique in holding such provocative opinions. It must be remembered that Vergil was criticised, especially for plagiarism, in his own day, and obliged to answer the criticisms personally. Moreover Livy was charged with verbosity by Pompeius Trogus, the Augustan historian (although the same trait was admired by Quintilian as 'milky richness' [*lactea ubertas*]).²⁹ All of this might suggest that Caligula was *au fait* with current trends in criticism. But the idea should not be pressed too hard. The comments look very much like the *obiter dicta* of a young iconoclast. It must also be recognised that it was something of a convention to ascribe perverse literary views to emperors. It was said of Hadrian, for instance, that he preferred Cato to Cicero, Ennius to Vergil, Caelius to Sallust, and passed judgement on Homer and Plato with the same pretentious arrogance. The allusion to Plato in the disparagement of Homer looks like the possible remnant of a witticism, and hardly meant to be taken at face value, given Caligula's habit of quoting that particular poet.³⁰

In his use of language, Caligula expressed scorn for a relaxed and excessively decorative style (*lenius comptiusque*), and singled out for censure Seneca, who was currently popular, saying that his compositions were mere *commissions*, and sand without lime.³¹ *Commissio* is a difficult word, taken from the language of the theatre and in the narrow sense means the opening act in a theatrical performance (or by extension the performance itself).³² Caligula presumably meant that Seneca's writings were just show pieces, aiming at light entertainment without any real substance.³³ It is in any case difficult to see how his strictures could be validly applied to Seneca's style, especially to a work like the *Consolatio ad Helviam*, which belongs to the Caligulan period. Caligula's views on Seneca might have seemed bold at the time. A century or so later they had become almost mainstream. Quintilian is highly critical of him, and Aulus Gellius wrote that in his own day some considered Seneca to be of little worth, and his style commonplace and trite, lacking real power and relying on contrived cleverness.³⁴

In his private activities Caligula is in reality probably at his most conventional. All of the Julio-Claudians exhibit to some degree the same combination of a passion for vulgar pursuits with a lively interest in matters of the intellect. If we strip away the colourful and exotic anecdotes, it seems that in this sphere Caligula was certainly no better, but probably not much worse, than his peers.

Notes

- 1 Wardman 1967. Of course there may have been few statues of Caligula available for inspection in Suetonius' day.
- 2 Sen. *Ira* 2.33.3; *Cons.* 2.18.1; Pliny *NH* 11.144; 12.10; Suet. *Cal.* 3.1, 35.2, 50.1; see Evans 1935: 67–8; 1941; 1969: 54–65; Coussin 1953: 246–7. Similar baldness paranoia was demonstrated by Julius Caesar, who was reduced to using a comb-over (Suet. *Jul.* 42.2), and Domitian, who wrote a book on hair care (Suet. *Dom.* 18.2). By contrast, Suetonius emphasises how attractive Augustus was throughout his life (Suet. *Aug.* 79.1).
- 3 Vives 1926: pl. 132.3–6; Grant 1950: 35, 101 pl. 6.3; Banti and Simonetti 1977: 141–50.
- 4 Suet. *Cal.* 29.1: see Rolfe 1928: 451 'shamless impudence'; Balsdon 1934b: 215; Ailloud 1967: 85. Esser 1958: 138 is perhaps more accurate with *Unbeugsamkeit*; the manuscripts actually read *adiatrephia*, and some add the apparent gloss 'inverecundia'. On the possible meanings of the term, see Wardle 1994: 253; Dubuisson 1998.
- 5 Tac. *Ag.* 13.2: *velox ingenio mobili paenitentiae*. The Christopher Fry parody was delivered by Margaret Thatcher but in fact written by Ronald Millar.
- 6 Suet. *Cal.* 52. Suet. *Jul.* 45.3 records that Caesar attracted attention by wearing a long-sleeved tunic, an oriental custom, the traditional Greek and Roman tunic being without sleeves; on Caligula's dressing up: Bellemore 1994.
- 7 Suet. *Cal.* 37.1; Cleopatra: 9.119–21; Macr. *Sat.* 3.17.16–18. Woods 2012: 459–62 suggests that there is confusion here between the food and dinnerware, and argues that the anecdote is part of the story about Incitatus' eating habits.
- 8 *CIL* VI. 4346; Philo *Leg.* 181; Sen. *Ira* 3.18.4; three structures belonging to a villa have recently been discovered, the oldest going back to the beginning of the first century BC; see Coarelli 2007: 355.
- 9 Sen. *Ad Polyb.* 17.4; Phil. *Leg.* 185, 351.
- 10 Vatican: Phil. *Leg.* 181; Coarelli 2007: 355 for the remains of a Roman villa in the Vatican district; Mevania: Suet. *Cal.* 43; Astura and Antium: Plin. *NH* 32.1–4.
- 11 Pliny *NH* 12.10; Suet. *Cal.* 37.1–2. Cleopatra: Plin. *NH* 9.119–21; Macr. *Sat.* 3.17.16–18.
- 12 Sen. *Cons. Pol.* 17.4; Suet. *Cal.* 41.2; Dio 59.22.3.
- 13 Symbol of riotous living: SHA, *Verus* 4.6; Suet. *Cal.* 37.1 stresses the exotic nature of his drinking rather than the quantity. Philo *Leg.* 14 speaks of heavy drinking, but only by contrast to his abstemious life before his accession. See Jerome 1923: 418–19.
- 14 Sen. *Cons.* 18.2; Suet. *Cal.* 36; Dio 59.3.3, 22.6; Plut. *Galb.* 9.1. The identity of the Catullus is unknown, Lindsay 1993: 130 speculates that he might be a relative of the famous love poet Catullus, which would give the comment a nice humorous twist. Wardle 1994: 276 suggests he is the consul Sextus Tadius Valerius Catullus, Hurley 1993: 137 his son, and Lindsay 1993: 130 suggests Lucius Valerius Catullus Messalinus, consul in AD 73. Herrmann 1985: 225–6 claims that he is the author of the *Lareolus* performed on the day of Catullus' death.
- 15 Suet. *Cal.* 16.1 27.4; Octavian: Suet. *Aug.* 69.1. Baldwin 1983: 271 suggests that Caligula banished the *spintriae* because of what they might reveal about him. Ironically his good friend Vitellius was called a *spintria* because he spent time on Capri when Tiberius was there. Dabrowski 1972: 35 suggests that they were a fiction.
- 16 *Gell.* 5.14.5.
- 17 Pliny 11.144, 245; Suet. *Cal.* 18.1, 30.3, 32.2, 38.4, 54.1, 55.2; Dio 59.14.1–3. On the *munera gladiatoria* presented by Caligula and his addiction to this form of entertainment, see Ville 1981: 130–4, 169, 281, 443.
- 18 Racehorses are widely depicted in mosaics, often with their names: Dunbabin 1978: pl. 81–92.

- 19 Jos. *AJ* 19.257; Plin. *NH* 33.90; Suet. *Aug.* 45.1, *Cal.* 55.2–3, *Vit.* 14.3, 17.2; Dio 59.14.6, 28.6.
- 20 Rostovtzeff 1905: 72 proposed that these were special games set aside for the young men of the senatorial order.
- 21 Suet. *Cal.* 15.2, 18.3; Dio 59.7.3, 13.8–9, 24.7, 60.27.2. The expense of these games may well have been a source of friction with the senate, examined by Newbold 1975: 32–3.
- 22 Suet. *Cal.* 54.2; Augustus taught Gaius and Lucius Caesar to swim (Suet. *Aug.* 64.3), and Agrippina the Younger was famously able to swim from a collapsing ship to fishing boats in the area when in her mid-forties (Tac. *Ann.* 14.5).
- 23 Philo *Leg.* 42; Tac. *Ann.* 4.14.4; Suet. *Tib.* 37.2, *Cal.* 18.2, 36.1, 54.2, 55.1; Dio 57.21.3, 59.2.5, 5.2, 5.5, 7.5, 21.2.
- 24 On Germanicus' oratorical and literary skills: Ovid *Fast.* 1.1–26, *Pont.* 2.5.41–56, 4.8.65–8; Suet. *Cal.* 3.1–2, see Parker 1946.
- 25 Horse: Plin. *NH* 8.155; Comedy: Suet. *Claud.* 11.2 (Germanican authorship is implied); Ovid: Ovid *Fast.* 1.19–20; *Pont.* 2.5.41–2, 4.8.65–6. See Wardle 1994: 110.
- 26 Tiberius wrote poems in both languages, and spoke Greek fluently. His linguistic interest (or pedantry) ran so deep that on one occasion he is said to have inadvertently published an edict that contained a word of dubious Latinity, and afterwards to have taken the matter so seriously that he spent a sleepless night worrying about it, finally calling in experts to guide him. He was, in addition, something of an expert on both sacred and secular law, once expressing a hope that he would master the subject by the end of his life: Suet. *Tib.* 11.3, 56, 57.1, 70; Tac. *Ann.* 3.64.4, 70.4, 4.38.3; Dio 55.9.5–8, 57.17.1–3; Tiberius' intellectual pursuits are well covered by Levick 1999: 5–7; see also Goodyear 1984: 606.
- 27 Suet. *Cal.* 20. Fishwick 1978: 76–7 sees a parody of local religion, and links it with the punishment meted out to Claudius (Suet. *Claud.* 9.1).
- 28 Jos. *AJ* 19.208–9; Tac. *Ann.* 13.3.6; Suet. *Cal.* 20, 53.1–2; Dio 59.16.1–7, 19.3–7; the *Suda* is the only source for the book on oratory; see Faur 1978.
- 29 Plat. *Rep.* 377c, 607; Suet. *Cal.* 34.2; Quint. 10.1.32; Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 43–6; Just. 38.3.11; Goodyear 1984: 603–10.
- 30 *SHA Hadrian* 16.6; Lambrechts 1953 claims that the antipathy arose because Vergil and Livy glorified Augustus, and because Homer downgraded the importance of Egypt in the treatment of Helen.
- 31 Suetonius refers only to a 'Seneca' without further qualification. It is argued by Grisart 1961 that the elder Seneca was intended here, being more famous than his son at this period. But given that there were tensions between Caligula and the younger Seneca, it is much more likely that the latter is intended: see Hurley 1993: 190; Wardle 1994: 342–3.
- 32 Suet. *Cal.* 53.2; Augustus did not like being treated frivolously in literature, and instructed the praetors to ensure that his name was not degraded by *commissiones* (Suet. *Aug.* 89.3). Bardon 1968: 122–3 thinks that *commissio* is a technical term applied to masonry (but not attested at this period). Stroux 1931: 351 believes that the MS read *commissura* – the join between the stones in construction; see Guastella 1992: 276–7; Wardle 1994: 343.
- 33 Presumably the image of sand without lime is meant to suggest that Seneca's language was like a poorly constructed building that would not hold together; see Braun 1950: 231; Guastella 1992: 277; Motto and Clark 1993: 13; Wardle 1994: 343–4; Steinrück 2004 argues that Caligula was alluding to Seneca's adherence to the 'asianic' style.
- 34 Quint. *Inst.* 10.1.125, 130; Gell. 12.2.1; see Goodyear 1984; Wilson 1987: 107–8.

THE NEW EMPEROR

The death of an emperor, even a remote and uncharismatic one, is an inherently dramatic event, and word of Tiberius' demise would have travelled the 120 or so miles from Misenum to Rome in record time. Until the news had sunk in properly, reaction in the city was decidedly guarded. Herod Agrippa's freedman, Marsyas, might announce the news to his master with a grand melodramatic flourish: 'the lion is dead', but Agrippa's jailer simply refused to believe the story, and his attitude was not untypical. Romans generally were reluctant to trust what they were hearing, suspecting a trick to test their loyalty, and conflicting rumours were spread that Tiberius was in fact alive and would soon turn up in person. As the truth gradually took hold, anxiety gave way to jubilation. People gave vent to long suppressed resentments, and damned Tiberius' soul for eternity. His physical remains were also the subject of spirited discussion. Should he be thrown down the Gemonian stairs (the fate of common criminals)? Or hurled into the river ('*Tiberius in Tiberim!*' was the popular slogan)? Or even taken to the amphitheatre at Atella (near Misenum) and half-cremated (a sign of disrespect)?¹

Such mundane issues did not distract the praetorian Prefect Macro. Once he had sent out relevant instructions to provincial governors and army commanders, he lost no time in heading for Rome, which he reached by March 18 at the latest. He supposedly brought letters from Caligula. One of them, according to Josephus, instructed Lucius Calpurnius Piso, the city Prefect and, as such, responsible for maintaining order in Rome (he was the son of the Piso suspected of murdering Germanicus), to transfer Agrippa from his cell into a more comfortable house arrest. The precise form of this supposed instruction is far from clear. Caligula was hardly in a position to give a direct *order* to Piso, and would not have simply usurped Tiberius' powers without reference to the senate, and the information about the letter is possibly a fiction derived from the colourful *Life of Agrippa*. In any case Agrippa was not ordered released outright, although Josephus attributes the delay to Antonia, her thinking being that an immediate release would be a public affront to Tiberius' memory. In due time Agrippa was released. In this he was more fortunate than a number of convicted criminals whose execution had been scheduled for the very day that news of the death arrived. Their appeals needed to

be addressed to the new emperor, and since he was not on hand, their jailers were afraid to ignore legal procedure and so went ahead with the executions.²

The existence of another of Josephus' letters cannot be seriously doubted, since it constituted the official report to the senate of Tiberius' death, although the description of its contents may not be precisely accurate. In it, Caligula apparently asked the senators to bestow on Tiberius the very same distinctions granted to Augustus when he died. The request seems to have included divine honours. This was simply more than the senators could stomach. At the same time they were not prepared to risk offence, and their compromise was simply to postpone bringing the issue to a vote, and to wait until Caligula turned up in person.³ The letter also covered what Josephus calls Caligula's 'own succession', surely just an extrapolation rather than the actual content, since Caligula (or more likely Macro) would hardly have risked provocation by such a naked statement of his ambitions at this preliminary stage. But in a sense Josephus got the purpose of the letter right, since the formal announcement of Tiberius' death was, in effect, the prelude to a well organised series of moves designed to lead to a smooth transition from Tiberius to Caligula, all carefully orchestrated by Macro. The first problem was Tiberius' will. In it he had made Caligula and Gemellus joint heirs to his estate, and Dio and Philo, as has been observed earlier, suggest that at the same time he bequeathed to them a share in ruling the empire.⁴ It is surely unthinkable that the punctilious Tiberius would have suggested that he could pass on the principate to a successor. All the same, the will was an exceptionally important political document. Unlike Tiberius in AD 14, neither young man had by AD 37 held any office that would automatically mark him as the next princeps. All that legally distinguished them from any other claimants, apart from Julio-Claudian ancestry, was their designation as Tiberius' heirs, even if heirs only to his estate. And in this context, Gemellus' potential claim to the principate would be just as strong as Caligula's.

Macro's solution was impressively simple. He had the will declared null and void by the senate. He laid the groundwork for this move carefully beforehand, making all necessary prior arrangements with 'the consuls and the others' as Dio informs us.⁵ There was nothing surprising about such prior planning. It makes sense that the Prefect would have foreseen the potential complexity of the annulment and have been shrewd enough to hold preliminary discussions with legal experts and with influential senators to ease its passing in the house. One of the consuls, Gnaeus Acerronius Proculus, might in fact have been in a position to combine both roles, since there are good grounds for identifying him with the distinguished jurist Proculus, a man eminent enough to give his name to a school of law, the 'Proculian'.⁶

The formal basis for the invalidation of Tiberius' will is not explained in the sources. It is hard to see the legal justification for cutting out Gemellus simply on the grounds of youth. There is another, even more serious problem. It appears that the whole will was declared null and void, since there was no legal necessity for Tiberius' other legacies to be paid out.⁷ But if the document as a whole was

annulled, the property should have passed to those descendants who came under Tiberius' parental authority, and both Caligula and Gemellus should have been treated equally. This clearly did not happen. A hint of an explanation may lie in Dio's superficially untenable suggestion that the annulment was justified essentially on political grounds, in that Tiberius had demonstrated mental instability in giving authority to rule to a mere boy (Gemellus). Whatever Tiberius might or might not have intended, the notion that the heir of the princeps was somehow *ipso facto* designated as the next princeps may well have been accepted as a quasi-legal concept by the senate. In fact, the proceedings raise an important constitutional issue. Since Caligula alone inherited Tiberius' estate after the annulment of the will, it implies that the estate belonged to him *by virtue of his position as princeps*, and that on succession the new princeps would acquire not only the imperial powers but also the imperial property of his predecessor, by virtue of his office. This process would have been made smoother by the increasing interdependence of the emperor's personal wealth and the imperial finances under his control. Similar thinking seems to underlie a senatorial decree passed later under Caligula, that whoever had bequeathed money to Tiberius and then survived him would be obliged to leave it to his successor.⁸ After Claudius, whose will was also suppressed, emperors seem generally to have given up making wills.⁹ In the chaos that followed the suicide of Nero in 68 we find that the property of the Julio-Claudians simply passed without enabling legislation into the hands of the men who replaced them. Otho acquired Nero's slaves and held a dinner in the palace on the Palatine. Vitellius enjoyed the imperial properties. Vespasian was able to sell off imperial palaces in Alexandria.¹⁰ It is clear, then, that for Rome's imperial rulers the ordinary laws of inheritance did not seem to apply, and there is good reason to believe that this principle was first constitutionally established on Caligula's accession.¹¹

The annulment of Tiberius' will would have meant that neither Caligula nor Gemellus would, by virtue of that will, have had any kind of formal advantage, one over the other, in the contest to succeed. Where then did Caligula's claim lie? There is no clear explanation, but it seems to rest essentially on the very Augustan notion of *consensus*, in that he was the choice of the Roman people and of the senate (and, of course, of the army). Given that Macro had already brought over the praetorians and the army commanders, senators in reality had little choice but to acquiesce in this *consensus*. But it is striking how enthusiastically they seem to have collaborated with Macro. They would of course have been inclined to favour Caligula as the son of Germanicus, and as representing the hopes that the old nobility had placed in his father. Yet it is difficult to believe that they could have been so naïve, and their eagerness is not easy to understand. Caligula's youth is not in itself the salient issue. He was, after all, almost twenty-five. By the time Nero had reached this age he had already crushed the Boudiccan rebellion and launched the first phase of a successful war against Parthia, to say nothing of murdering his mother. But while Caligula was not especially young, he was totally inexperienced. Highly admired figures of Rome's recent history had entered the

political arena at much younger ages, men like Octavian and Pompey. But they served an apprenticeship in politics and in battle.¹²

It seems that in the case of Caligula and Nero (and one could also arguably add the accession of Claudius, given that he was widely if quite wrongly perceived as incompetent) senators had lost their power of independent thinking. Yavetz persuasively suggests that the senate was a body that was only a shadow of its old self, totally demoralised by the long series of treason trials that had terrorised the nobility during the reign of Tiberius.¹³ It may be that Caligula's inexperience was in fact seen as an asset. It may have created the impression that he could be easily manipulated. Such a misapprehension could well lie at the root of many of the disasters that were to befall the senate in the next four years. But for the moment, if any did feel lingering reservations about the annulment of the will, Caligula knew how to dispel them. He promptly honoured Tiberius' legacies, even adding bonuses to make sure that there would be no complaints. In fact, once the will had been declared null and void there would have been no need for the legacies to be paid at all, making Caligula's act seem all the more generous.

The manoeuvrings over the will would, of course, have cast something of a shadow over the process of the succession. Under Augustus, Tiberius had been put in place to secure a smooth transition with the active help of the incumbent; Caligula was set to make his bid for power apparently against the contrary instructions (however oblique) of his predecessor. It was essential, then, for Macro to proceed with utmost speed to the second stage of the plan, made possible once the will had been revoked – the formal recognition, by the senate, of Caligula as princeps.¹⁴ The Arval record provides vivid evidence of the senate's compliance. It shows that on March 18 in the following two years, AD 38 and 39, anniversary sacrifices were carried out because on that very day Caligula 'had been acclaimed Imperator by the senate': *quod hoc die...a senatu imperat [or appellatus est (or esset)]*.¹⁵ In the Republican period, after a victory in the field, a successful general, though already *imperator* by virtue of the exercise of his *imperium*, might, as a special mark of honour, be acclaimed as *imperator* by his soldiers. He then assumed the title of imperator after his name, which he maintained during the tenure of his office, or, if one should be awarded, until his triumph. There was a tendency in the late republic for figures like Caesar to retain the title even after their term of office had expired. The senate, as well as the army, had the traditional right to acclaim a victorious commander as *imperator*, and its exercise of this right in the case of Caligula is of great interest.¹⁶ Caligula did not hold *imperium*, nor could he by any stretch of the imagination be said to have won a significant military victory. By using the old republican formula the senate was in a sense acknowledging that its actions were dictated not by recognition of an appropriate achievement, but in response to action that had been taken by one element of the Roman army, the praetorians, who, even before the first senate meeting, had, we can be sure, sworn loyalty to Caligula as their commander, their *imperator*. That term by now seems to indicate little more than 'princeps', a process that must have started to gain momentum under Tiberius and one that he tried to oppose, to judge from

his comment that he would be *imperator* only to his troops.¹⁷ By the time of the senatorial acclamation Caligula had already taken *de facto* power through the coalition, for the first time, between a claimant and the praetorian guard. This was not, of course, the first time a claimant to power had used military force to obtain his objective. There were ample precedents from the republic. Indeed Caligula could claim an Augustan precedent. In 44 BC Octavian toured Campania and bribed Caesar's veterans with payments of 500 denarii each to rally to his side, and in the following year a group of his centurions forced their way into the senate demanding that Octavian be made consul (he was). Of course in Octavian's day the praetorian guard did not exist, and its emergence as a force in determining the succession of Caligula was a phenomenon that would be repeated through Rome's history. After Tiberius' death Caligula would have been acclaimed as *imperator* by the detachment of praetorians at Misenum, and by the troops stationed at the marine base there.¹⁸ Macro had also ensured the support of the military commanders and provincial governors. We know that Vitellius, governor of Syria, was in Jerusalem when news of Tiberius' death, a month earlier, reached him. Macro's despatch must have been clear and explicit, since Vitellius proceeded at once to administer an oath of loyalty to Caligula.¹⁹ Similar scenes would have been enacted elsewhere throughout the empire.

From Tiberius on, the oath of loyalty sworn to the new princeps became an established institution. Immediately after Augustus' death it was taken first by the consuls, then by the Prefects of the praetorian guard and of the *annona* (grain supply), followed by senators, soldiers (presumably praetorians) and people. Tiberius then ensured the loyalty of the troops of Italy by using an oath of allegiance previously established by Augustus. Germanicus took the oath personally and administered it to his officials and the Belgic communities (*civitates*) in Gaul, his action probably being typical of provincial governors.²⁰ We are fortunate in that, of the six surviving oaths made to Julio-Claudian emperors, at least two belong to the accession of Caligula. One is a fairly routine example from Assos in Mysia in north-west Asia Minor, preserved on a bronze tablet along with a congratulatory decree passed by the town.²¹ The other, from Aritium in Lusitania in modern Portugal, is more interesting constitutionally. It was administered on May 11, fifty-two days after Tiberius' death, by Gaius Ummidius Durmius Quadratus, described as the legate of Gaius Caesar Germanicus Imperator, that is, Caligula.²² The swearer pledges to be an enemy to any enemy of the emperor:

I shall not cease to pursue in armed warfare by land and sea anyone who brings or might bring danger upon him and his welfare until that person has been punished, and I shall not consider myself or my children more precious than his welfare, and those who have been of hostile intent towards him I shall consider to be my enemies.

It is to be noted that in the oath Caligula has been given the title of *imperator*, suggesting an acclamation by the troops in Lusitania. He is not, however, called

Augustus, a title which only the senate could bestow. Clearly, this particular oath must have been administered by Quadratus in response to the instructions sent out by Macro immediately after Tiberius' death, before the senate had bestowed the title of Augustus upon Caligula; probably, in fact, before they had any say in the matter.²³

On March 18 the senate was presented with a *fait accompli*. Whatever reservations there might have been about the legality of Caligula's position (none is recorded), there could be no doubt at all that he was in practical control. The fact that the original communications to the armies had been conveyed by the Prefect of the praetorians would have brought home to senators whose hand was at the tiller. This had in a sense been acknowledged at the very outset in Rome, when convicted criminals were put to death despite the presence in the city of the consuls; it was apparently thought that in Caligula's absence the only individual with the authority to grant a pardon was not on hand. Nor would the lesson be lost on future contenders. Both of Caligula's immediate successors, Claudius and Nero, were acclaimed by the praetorians before being recognised by the senate. When the senators were called upon to acknowledge Caligula's claim, they had little choice but to accede, although there was no requirement that they do so with such a show of enthusiasm.

The acclamation in Rome of Caligula as imperator, of course, in itself was largely a symbolic gesture. The senate had not bestowed actual *imperium* on him, and his constitutional position was not yet defined. Its definition would await his arrival.²⁴ Macro had done his work well. In contrast to AD 14, when Augustus' death led to confusion in the senate and disorder on the frontiers, Caligula's accession was a brilliantly stage-managed affair, brought off without an apparent hitch. The way was now paved for his triumphal progress to the city. After Augustus' death in Nola in Campania his body had been brought to Rome in a stately procession lasting fifteen days. Caligula's procession from Misenum, accompanied by praetorians, went at about the same pace. From Sinuessa the two routes converged, to progress towards Rome along the Appian Way.²⁵ But the reaction of the populace was markedly different on this occasion. As Caligula made his way towards the city, the immense joy felt in reaction to his accession was evident. People came out in throngs to meet their *princeps exoptatissimus* ('most earnestly desired princeps'), calling him by pet names – 'star', 'chick', 'baby', 'ward' (*alumnus*).²⁶ There had not been scenes like this in Italy since the days when Caligula's father Germanicus would be mobbed by crowds of admirers if he went out in public. Though dressed in mourning garb, Caligula was greeted rapturously by crowds carrying blazing torches, and sacrifices were made along the course of his route. The offerings over the next three months were said to total 160,000. There could have been no doubt left in the minds of ordinary people who witnessed the procession that Caligula was to be the new princeps. And the ecstatic reaction was not confined to Italy. The magic of Germanicus' name and Macro's publicity campaign aroused enthusiasm far and wide. Philo describes vividly the jubilant response that greeted the return of the 'golden age' from every class of society, with banquets, holidays,

all-night revels, ‘every sort of pleasure, appealing to every sense’, an unprecedented display of affection for an emperor, and shown in every corner of the empire. Some specific examples outside Italy are known. In Jerusalem and Alexandria Jews offered splendid sacrifices. When the city of Assos took its oath of loyalty, it appointed an embassy to convey it to Rome, and added its congratulations:

Since the rule of Caesar Germanicus Augustus has been declared, hoped for in the prayers of all men, and the world has found joy beyond limit, and every city and every nation has been eager to look upon the face of the god, since the sweetest era for mankind has now been established...

In Greece the League of the Achaeans, Boeotians, Locrians, Phocians and Euboeans offered sacrifices and prayers for Caligula’s well-being, and voted that statues be erected in his honour.²⁷

Caligula reached Rome on March 28, an event considered important enough to be recorded by the Arvals.²⁸ The cortège accompanying Tiberius’ body initially waited outside, possibly for reasons of security. It was brought into the city under a military guard next day, probably before dawn.²⁹ Caligula’s first recorded act after entering the city was to go before the senate. We cannot be sure whether this was immediately after his arrival, on March 28, or the next day, following the arrival of Tiberius’ funeral cortège. Whichever day, it was clearly a meeting of great significance (so important that Dio supplies Caligula’s precise age: twenty-five years, less five months and four days), attended not only by senators but also by equestrians and even by ordinary people.³⁰ Goodwill prevailed, and the presence of the visitors was tolerated. Their attendance may perhaps even have been pre-arranged, to ensure that the formal conferring of powers took place in the presence of, and with the *consensus* of, all three orders. This was the tradition laid down by Augustus in the *Res Gestae*: *per consensum universorum potens rerum omnium rempublicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli* (‘exercising power in all things through *consensus* I transferred the state from my authority to the jurisdiction of the senate and Roman people’). That some similar phrase might have been used on this occasion is hinted at in the language of Suetonius, who reports that Caligula’s powers were conferred *consensu senatus et... turbae* (‘with the *consensus* of the senate and the crowd’).³¹

At this meeting the senate, in the words of Suetonius, granted to Caligula an awesome authority, *ius arbitriumque omnium rerum* (‘power and authority over all things’), which would have included the *tribunicia potestas* and the extended proconsular *imperium*, as well as the special titles that he a few days earlier refrained from using.³² The gradually accumulated powers of Augustus, as Dio may be suggesting, were thus granted to Caligula in a single block. Although the text of the senatorial resolution on this occasion has not survived, it may well have provided the precedent for subsequent enactments of the law that formally defined the imperial power, the *lex imperii*. Part of a senatorial decree granting imperial powers some time later, in AD 69, to Vespasian, has in fact survived,

recorded on a bronze tablet.³³ This so-called *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani* seems to have originated in a decree of the senate passed in Rome in December, AD 69, about six months after Vespasian had been acclaimed imperator by the soldiers. Some of its provisions, almost certainly, go back to Caligula's accession in 37. Part of the original document, unfortunately, is missing, but among those measures whose record has survived is Clause VI, which gives the princeps the right and power (*ius* and *potestas*) to do whatever he thinks to be in the interests of the state, thus technically granting him the discretion to violate even existing laws. If Brunt is correct in his belief that this clause goes back to a law of AD 37, the transition from Caligula the private citizen to Caligula the princeps was a sudden and abrupt one, and the careful balance of authority that Augustus had evolved and which Tiberius had struggled to maintain, came to an end at this meeting of the senate in March, AD 37. In what might be considered a curious mixture of duress and enthusiasm the senators gave a *legal* sanction to power that Augustus had exercised only by virtue of his general status and prestige, as represented by his *auctoritas*.³⁴ Caligula would be restrained only by his own sense of discretion, which became in lamentably short supply as his reign progressed. Dio, in a confused and textually corrupt passage, implies that he regularly sought senatorial dispensation from the established laws, but this practice is presumably limited to the early period of the reign when he made a show of treating the senate with deference. Suetonius saw Caligula as someone determined to transform the principate into a monarchy. But by handing over to him his new power the senate had in fact made the transformation for him, and when he later boasted that he had 'every power over every person' (*omnia in omnes licere*), this was not the ravings of a madman – he had good constitutional grounds for his conviction that he was a *princeps legibus solutus* ('a princeps not bound by the laws'). It is therefore not surprising that, to a Jewish provincial like Philo, Caligula was a young man whose authority was unchecked, and his subjects were, in effect, his slaves.³⁵

In addition to formal powers, the senate conferred on Caligula titles appropriate to his new status. At the time of his accession, his name would formally have been Gaius Iulius Caesar Germanicus. 'Gaius' is the most common Roman *praenomen*, and Seneca reports that Caligula was offended when a Herennius Macer (otherwise unknown) addressed him by it, but almost certainly it was the familiarity of Herennius' attitude, rather than anything inherent in the name, that upset him.³⁶ Like his father he did not make use of the *nomen* 'Iulius', but this is not, in itself, particularly significant. In the imperial period it was not uncommon for the nobility to drop their *nomina*, technically the most important element of the nomenclature, identifying one's 'clan', but which had lost much of its distinction by being transmitted to freedmen and clients. Octavian himself dropped 'Iulius', acquired when he was adopted by Julius Caesar, from his name, and it is rarely used by the male members of the imperial family. 'Caesar', also acquired by Octavian on adoption, was technically a *cognomen*, indicating the family division within a clan. Its close association with the imperial family had given it, by the time of Caligula, a special attachment to the imperial function.

Hence Claudius assumed ‘Caesar’ in his name from 41 on, although he had not himself been adopted by his predecessor.³⁷ To these family names were now added highly significant titles, and of all the titles granted by the senate, none resonated more powerfully than ‘Augustus’, a word that embodied the moral and political authority of the princeps, and distinguished the imperial ruler from the statesmen of the republican period. Suetonius and Dio claim that Tiberius had declined to be styled as ‘Augustus’, despite being entitled to the privilege, except when he dealt with foreign kings.³⁸ This may well have been Tiberius’ intention, but clearly he found that in the minds of most people the title was inextricably bound up with the idea of the principate, and he was obliged to carry it almost from the outset, as his coins demonstrate. It is similarly used from the very outset by Caligula. The *praenomen* ‘Imperator’, adopted by Octavian, was avoided by Tiberius and afterwards by Caligula, at least in Rome, although it is attested briefly in the provinces.³⁹ Of the other titles bestowed at the discretion of the senate, Caligula may well have postponed accepting that of the pontifex maximus (‘senior priest’), chief interpreter of the sacred law and the high priest of all the gods. The office commanded great respect, and remained inherently bound up with the principate until the fourth century. The delay of the early emperors in taking up the office may have been a mark of its prestige. Augustus did not assume the chief pontificate on the death in 13 BC of the incumbent, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, but waited until the following year. Similarly Tiberius waited almost a year after Augustus’ death in August AD 14, until the following March.⁴⁰ Caligula’s delay was not a long one – the abbreviation PM appears on his earliest coins. But he may well have waited until he had recovered the remains of his mother and brother. These he is said to have collected with his own hands, an act which would have been strictly prohibited to a pontifex maximus, who was not allowed to touch a dead body.⁴¹ It is possible that the drachm issued by Caligula in Caesarea, displaying the implements of the pontifex maximus on the reverse (Figure 4.1), was issued to celebrate the bestowal of this office. We do know for certain that he postponed acceptance of one other title, Pater Patriae (‘father of the country’). Dio says that the postponement was for a short time only, and, as will be seen, his testimony has been confirmed by a fragment of the Arval record.⁴² There is no certain information that the senate granted any other titles. Suetonius claims that the young emperor gave himself several, including Pius, Castrorum Filius, Pater Exercituum, Optimus Maximus Caesar, but there is no primary evidence that any of these was adopted. It is possible that he used the expression *castrorum filius* (‘son of the armies’) informally, to win the affections of the troops when on campaign in Germany (it, in turn, could have led to confusion about his place of birth). *Pater exercituum* (‘father of the armies’) might have been similarly used. But the assumption of such nomenclature could have been informal at best, and none of it appears on coins or genuine inscriptions.⁴³

The famous nickname ‘Caligula’ (‘little boots’) had been acquired as a term of affection when the little Caligula was dressed by his mother as a soldier. After he became emperor he chose to abandon it, and when a senior centurion used



Figure 4.1 Caligula drachm (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

the name he found himself in trouble. In this case the issue was almost certainly more than just familiarity. Seneca observes that he was most commonly known by ‘Caligula’ from being born in a military camp, but in his later disturbed condition he found the name offensive.⁴⁴ This aversion to his childhood nickname may arise from a desire to separate himself from a period spent under his mother’s tutelage, or it might simply reflect an emperor standing on his dignity.⁴⁵

Caligula’s behaviour on the momentous occasion of meeting the senate for the first time was impeccable, and he was punctilious, doubtless under Macro’s guidance, about showing maximum deference to the members. Dio observes, in a much-discussed passage, that at the outset Caligula seemed most *democraticos*, not presuming to communicate with the senate or to the people in writing, nor adopting any of the imperial titles (*onomata archika*), but that he afterwards turned excessively monarchical, assuming in one day ‘all the things’ (Dio’s Greek is ambiguous) that Augustus had assumed reluctantly and gradually, and some of which Tiberius had not accepted at all.⁴⁶ Dio’s *onomata* (strictly, ‘titles’) is generally taken here to mean that Caligula initially declined not only titles, but powers and prerogatives also. The assumption, however, may not be warranted, and Dio may be suggesting that at first Caligula was so modest that he declined even the titles that he might have assumed, but then took on board everything – titles, privileges, powers. The issue raised here is limited to the period of ten days or so that followed Caligula’s acclamation as imperator and before he had his first meeting with the senate. In this intervening time he was anxious to maintain an outward show of constitutional deference. As a broad principle of the imperial succession, names and titles appropriate to a princeps and family were voted by the senate and not merely usurped. Thus Galba in 68 would be scrupulous enough to use none of the titles voted to him until, in the course of his march to Rome, he had met at Narbo in Gaul the embassy sent by the senate. Even as late as the third century Dio was shocked by the way Macrinus and Elagabalus headed their letters with

titles that had not been formally awarded them. For Caligula to observe this nicety would create a highly favourable initial impression.⁴⁷ By what is, if a coincidence, a remarkable one, the fourth-century calendar of Philocalus (*CIL* I² 260, *Inscr. Ital* 3.2.243) lists the *Initium Caiani* under March 28, the day of Caligula's entry into the city. The language suggests the beginning of games of some sort, and since the *Caianum* (*Gaianum*) was the name of a racetrack later created by Caligula below the Vatican Hill (see [Chapter 11](#)) it suggests that he might have instituted games there to mark the anniversary of his arrival into the city. If this identification is correct it would mean, of course, a remarkable survival of the games in some form until 354, the date of the calendar.⁴⁸

There must surely have been some in the senate who resented being manoeuvred into handing over both the trappings and the reality of power to an untrained twenty-five year old, and Lucius Arruntius can hardly have been alone in his misgivings about the new emperor's dependence on Macro.⁴⁹ Caligula went out of his way to allay such concerns at the first senate meeting, where he demonstrated fine diplomatic tact. The deaths of the highly popular Germanicus, and later of his wife Agrippina and their two oldest sons, had aroused strong emotions among many Romans, as well as deep sympathy for their surviving children. Caligula played on these emotions, putting himself under the senators' guardianship and protection, calling himself their 'son and ward'. In true Augustan fashion, he offered to share power with them and to work towards their shared goals; in the euphoria of the moment many may even have been naïve enough to believe that all this would actually happen.⁵⁰ He had to be especially cautious about the attitude he displayed towards his predecessor, and he recognised the need to maintain a very careful balance. There was, on the one hand, a widespread relief that the remote and austere Tiberius had at last left the scene. His successor would need to make clear that Tiberius would not be his model. But at the same time *pietas* required that he show respect to a grandfather, and this may well have been his own personal inclination. Dio insists that Caligula sought constantly to denigrate Tiberius, and has convinced many modern scholars that he felt a deep and abiding hatred for his predecessor. This notion is not, however, borne out by any inscriptional or numismatic evidence, nor, indeed, by the other literary sources, and Dio's intention seems to be to exaggerate Caligula's criticism of Tiberius for the express purpose of highlighting the new emperor's perversity.⁵¹

Caligula did not in fact pursue the issue of divine honours for Tiberius. It would have been too much of an uphill battle, and in any case it may not have been something that was close to his heart. He limited himself to providing a public funeral. It was, however, a splendid occasion in the old Roman tradition, and the new young emperor personally delivered a tear-filled eulogy. After cremation, the remains were laid to rest, almost certainly in the mausoleum of Augustus.⁵² Although the issue of Tiberius' apotheosis seems not to have been reopened, he was granted the distinction of having his speeches read on New Year's Day, along with those of Augustus, and the ritual to enact this took up all the senate's business until the



Figure 4.2 Caligula sestertius (photograph courtesy of Andreas Pangerl, www.romancoins.info)

evening.⁵³ We should probably not read too much into the decision that the regular oath taken on New Year's Day to uphold Tiberius' *acta* would no longer be taken.⁵⁴ In fact Tiberius had at first personally refused to allow the oath in the case of his own *acta*, insisting that he and others swear to uphold only those of Augustus. It was not until AD 32, after the fall of Sejanus, that he relented, and his own measures were included. Thus in 37 the old practice that had been in force before 32 was resumed; this need not be seen as a personal attack on Tiberius, since the symbolic honour of having his speeches read continued.⁵⁵

One aspect of Caligula's determination to honour Tiberius' memory would in fact have been particularly popular, his generosity in paying the late emperor's legacies, even though with the annulment of the will this was no longer a legal obligation. The most politically important legacy was, of course, the payment to the praetorians, and he lost no time in dispensing it. They had been left a thousand sesterces each, and this sum was doubled by Caligula from his personal funds. He thus became the first emperor, in a sense, to honour, by such a gift, his debt to the praetorians for their role in his accession, and he established a precedent for his successors (Claudius paid the enormous sum of 15,000 each). The gift was awarded at a special ceremony attended by senators and perhaps commemorated by a coin issue that depicts Caligula addressing a group of five soldiers (*Figure 4.2*).⁵⁶ Caligula may have been taking a leaf from Tiberius' book, since his predecessor, it was claimed, had sought to overawe the senators by arranging for them to be present at an inspection of the praetorians. Bequests were also paid to the people, as well as to the legions, the vigiles and urban cohorts. In addition, the legacies from Livia's will, left unpaid by Tiberius, were finally honoured. All of this, combined with a lavish new building programme, would place heavy demands on Caligula's resources. In the general excitement of his popularity, he probably gave little thought to the financial consequences of his extravagant generosity. He would be forced to do so before too long.

During his stay on Capri, Caligula had displayed no inclination to intercede on behalf of his mother and brothers, and had seemingly betrayed a chilling indifference to their fate (although it is hard to see what else he could have done). Now that he was princeps he could safely assume the role of dutiful son and brother, and he displayed his *pietas* by a brilliant *coup de théâtre*. He went out to the islands of Pontia and Pandateria where Agrippina and Nero had died, and brought back the urns containing their ashes. The task would hardly have been an easy one, since Nero's remains had been scattered and buried, precisely in order to make recovery difficult. Moreover, he had a stormy passage, which he turned to his advantage, since it made his devotion seem all the greater. The ashes were brought to Ostia, and from there were carried up the Tiber to a landing stage at the Campus Martius, from where they were borne on biers by equestrians, to join the ashes of Germanicus in the mausoleum of Augustus. Romans would be reminded, of course, of the scene just over seventeen years earlier, when Agrippina with no less solemnity had brought her husband's remains to Italy. To ensure maximum effect Caligula arranged the event for the middle of the day, when the streets were crowded. The inscriptions from the funerary urns have survived, and it is noteworthy that Nero is called the son of Germanicus, great-grandson of Augustus, with no mention of Tiberius. Given Tiberius' perceived role in Nero's death, Caligula may have wished to avoid stirring up public resentment. Moreover, by omitting Tiberius' name the inscription as it stands serves to emphasise his brother's Augustan genealogy. The same ritual could not be carried out for Drusus, since there was no trace of his remains, and, instead, cenotaphs were erected in his honour.⁵⁷ Statues for the two dead brothers were ordered, and responsibility for contracting them was given to Claudius (who bungled the commission). This was most likely the occasion for the issue of a dupondius depicting Nero and Drusus (Figure 4.3). Minted initially in Caligula's first year, it shows the two young men riding horses, with their cloaks flying back, and Caligula's legend on the reverse.⁵⁸



Figure 4.3 Caligula dupondius (photograph courtesy of Andreas Pangerl, www.romancoins.info)



Figure 4.4 Caligula denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

Honours were heaped on Caligula's dead parents. The Arvals sacrificed on their birthdays, even though Agrippina's had been declared an inauspicious day (*dies nefastus*) by Tiberius, and precious metal coins were in this year issued in honour of each, displaying their portraits and identifying them as Caligula's father and mother (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Germanicus was further honoured, with his image on the obverse of an as (and Caligula's legend on the reverse) (Figure 4.6).⁵⁹ The month of September was renamed 'Germanicus'. There was a precedent for this: Quinctilis had previously been renamed Iulius, as the birth month of Julius Caesar, and Sextilis renamed Augustus, because it was the month of his first consulate, one of the most lasting inheritances of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. September may thus have been chosen for Germanicus



Figure 4.5 Caligula denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)



Figure 4.6 Caligula as (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

for the simple reason that it came in sequence after two eponymous months, but there was the added advantage that it offered a nice dynastic arrangement: Caesar–Augustus–Germanicus. In Egyptian cities the substitution of names of Germanicus’ family for the months became common, such as ‘Gaieos’ for Phamenoth or ‘Drusilleios’ for Payni.⁶⁰ Games in the circus were established in Agrippina’s honour, together with a *carpentum* (carriage) that would carry her image in the circus procession. This is commemorated in an undated sestertius with the bust of Agrippina, identified as Caligula’s mother, on the obverse and a *carpentum* on the reverse drawn by mules (Figure 4.7). In addition, the villa at Herculaneum where she had for a time been imprisoned was destroyed.⁶¹



Figure 4.7 Caligula sestertius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

These highly popular gestures surely did not happen spontaneously, and to a large degree they would almost certainly have been masterminded by Macro. Philo has left an account of Caligula's activities that dwells on the trivial and seems in large part imaginary, but may at the same time reflect the kind of gossip that Philo himself picked up in Rome. Macro, he claims, would wake Caligula up if he fell asleep during dinner parties. If he got carried away too much at dances or laughed too loudly at ribald jokes or got so excited by the music that he wanted to join in the songs, Macro would restrain him. He would remind him to behave appropriately at all hours. This picture of Macro carefully directing Caligula's public image is probably not too far from the truth. The Prefect also controlled his meetings. Suetonius says that Caligula refused even his much admired grandmother Antonia a private interview, insisting that Macro be present also.⁶²

Antonia had, of course, played an important role in the downfall of Sejanus, or at least it was believed that she had, and Macro may well have felt that she could be a dangerous player. At the same time he would have been fully aware of the great respect felt for her, and would not have discouraged Caligula from paying her all due honours, for public consumption, provided, of course, that they afforded her no opportunity to exercise real power. She was granted certain rights once enjoyed by Livia. These included the privileges of the Vestal Virgins, who were entitled to occupy special seats in the theatre and at public games.⁶³ She was also appointed priestess of Augustus, and received Livia's old title of Augusta. She appears not to have taken up this last during her lifetime, and its first known appearance is after her death, on an Arval fragment of 38, honouring her birthday.⁶⁴ The sources speak of Caligula behaving with deference towards her at first, but gradually feeling irritated by her attempts to interfere, a familiar pattern in the relations between Julio-Claudian emperors and the women of the court. Suetonius claims that when, on one occasion, she tried to offer counsel, Caligula rebuffed her firmly with the reminder that his power was absolute.⁶⁵

Antonia died on May 1, AD 37, at the age of seventy-three. Suetonius and Dio both claim that Caligula drove her to her death by his criticisms and the indignities she suffered. But since he did not reach Rome until March 28, and was absent from the city for much of April, collecting the remains of his mother and brother, it seems unlikely that he would have had the time to drive Antonia to her death by insulting behaviour, even if he had been inclined to do so. It is also hard to imagine that he would have paid her no honours on her death, as Suetonius implies.⁶⁶ She died during the rampant euphoria of the early phase of his reign, and quite apart from any question of personal affection, a public slight at this time against the most respected woman in Rome would have been politically unimaginable.

The most extravagant honours were reserved for Caligula's sisters. As well as receiving the privileges of the Vestals they were allowed to watch the public games from the imperial seats, an exceptional honour for a woman. They were also included in the standard formula that the consuls used when making proposals to the senate, wishing success to the emperor, as well as in the annual vows taken for his safety. These last have their origin in a republican tradition, the *vota pro*



Figure 4.8 Caligula sestertius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

salute reipublicae ('vows for the safety of the state'), carried out by the consuls on January 1. Under Tiberius, Livia's name was included in the formula, and, after her death, so was that of Sejanus; but the privilege was still considered something special, and previously Tiberius had objected strenuously to the unauthorised inclusion of Nero and Drusus.⁶⁷ What is perhaps even more remarkable is that the sisters were included also in the annual vows of allegiance to the emperor. There seems to be no Roman model for their inclusion in this type of oath, although the decree passed by the people of Assos at the beginning of his reign does pledge allegiance to Caligula *and his house*, showing that there was at least a precedent among the communities of the Greek East.⁶⁸ In the first year of his reign (but not in later years) Caligula issued a dramatic sestertius with a reverse depicting the three sisters (Figure 4.8).⁶⁹ They stand side by side, their bodies facing front, and are identified by name. On the left is Agrippina, representing the type of *Securitas*, with her head turned right, holding a cornucopia in the right hand, with the right arm on a column and her left hand on Drusilla's shoulder. In the centre, Drusilla, as *Concordia*, has her head turned left, holding a *patera* (flat dish) in her right hand and a cornucopia in the left. On the right stands (Julia) Livilla, as *Fortuna*, with her head turned left, holding a rudder in her right hand and a cornucopia in the left. The prominence given to the sisters has no true precedent in the history of Roman coinage, and suggests an extraordinary honour. To the extent that these measures have a political purpose (as opposed to springing from purely personal and sentimental feelings), it is to enhance the prestige of the imperial family and thus of Caligula himself. There is no justification for reading into them any notion that he planned to give his sisters any kind of partnership in the actual exercise of power.

Even Caligula's uncle Claudius came in for his share of honours, when, on July 1, at the age of forty-six, he was finally taken into the consulship, as Caligula's colleague. Up to then, Claudius had been treated with scorn and contempt,

and kept in the background, remaining an equestrian and in fact heading the deputation of equestrians that went to meet Caligula on his grand progress towards Rome. Now for the first time he became a consul and a senator, and was given the additional distinction of presiding at the games in the absence of the emperor.

As happens in such situations, Caligula's friends also benefited from his accession, in particular Herod Agrippa. His earlier support of Caligula on Capri paid off, and he was rewarded with his own kingdom. Philip, son of Herod the Great, had ruled part of his father's kingdom as the tetrarch of Batanea, with Trachonitis and Auranitis (see Figure 10.1) until his death, in AD 33/4. Tiberius apparently placed his domain under the authority of the governor of Syria, with its revenues kept aside in a separate fund. Caligula now bestowed the old tetrarchy on his friend, with some added benefits. Agrippa was given the title of king, as well as the revenues that had accumulated since Philip's death.⁷⁰ It is possible that at the same time, Caligula granted him Abilene, a portion of Ituraea east of Antilebanon. We know from a reference in Luke's Gospel that this area was ruled by Lysanias in about AD 27. Lysanias had presumably died by 37.⁷¹ Also Caligula bestowed on Agrippa the *ornamenta praetoria*, the right to wear the praetor's insignia. While this conferred no actual power, it was a signal honour, and he seems to have broken new ground in bestowing it on a client king. Antiochus, son of the former King of Commagene, was also the recipient of the new emperor's favours. He must have been on close terms with Caligula, although nothing is known about their earlier relationship. Early in 37 he recovered his father's old kingdom, confiscated under Tiberius (see [Chapter 14](#)).

Romans would not have taken serious exception to Caligula's personal intervention in the regions outside Italy at this stage, especially since he had a stroke of exceptional good fortune, one that enabled him to be associated with a major diplomatic victory. By the time of Tiberius' death, relations with the kingdom of Parthia had reached a critical stage. In early 37 the aggressively ambitious Parthian King Artabanus was reputedly planning an invasion of Syria. The province's governor, Vitellius, responded to the provocation with great courage and energy. He moved his army up to the Euphrates, and overawed the Parthian, who decided to yield in the face of superior force and decisive action. The Romans and Parthians met at the Euphrates, according to Josephus, in a luxury pavilion in the diplomatically appropriate middle of the river. They reached an agreement whose details are unknown but which apparently was amicable. Artabanus certainly seems to have made a display of compliance. He gave his son Darius as hostage (thus giving Darius the opportunity to play a minor role in a colourful historical event, when he accompanied Caligula over his bridge on the Bay of Naples [see [Chapter 11](#)]). According to Suetonius, Artabanus crossed the river and paid homage to the Roman eagles and standards, and even to the statues of Augustus and Caligula. If this last detail is accurate it suggests that his position must have been especially weak.⁷² None of this was by any reasonable measure Caligula's achievement, but Tiberius had died in the meantime, and the

Roman position might have been helped by the fact that Artabanus had deeply despised Tiberius but apparently still felt a special affection for the memory of Germanicus – he was one of the eastern monarchs reputedly much affected by his death, and by his son Caligula's later illness.⁷³ It is certainly to Caligula's credit that he seems to have been willing to be guided by Vitellius in confirming the *modus vivendi* agreed with Artabanus. It is possible that part of the price of the agreement may have been the removal of the Roman candidate, Mithridates, from the throne of Armenia. He was at any rate recalled to Rome by Caligula and imprisoned, for reasons not made clear by the sources.⁷⁴

To all appearances, the policy adopted under Caligula, if not necessarily *by* him, on the Parthian frontier, of refusing to commit Roman arms in pursuit of an obsessive Roman ambition, namely, the control of Armenia, seems to have succeeded. But his success, admired by some modern scholars, was surely illusory. Caligula for the moment probably had no interest in feats of arms against Parthia – his military ambitions were focused on Germany and Britain. Artabanus for his part may have shown a willingness to compromise to a large extent because the emperor was the son of the great Germanicus, whose diplomatic skills and personal qualities had made such a profound impression on the Parthians. Had Caligula survived for much longer, Artabanus, like the senate, would surely have come to appreciate the difference between the father and the son. We unfortunately do not know what was decided for Armenia in 37, but there is no sign that the agreement reached then was based on solid and lasting foundations. In the event, history shows how ephemeral these events proved to be. Caligula's arrangements with Parthia did not long survive him, and Mithridates was eventually restored to his kingdom by Claudius.⁷⁵

Of all the measures undertaken by Caligula at the beginning of his reign, it would have been a domestic one that proved most popular – the decision to suspend charges under the law of *maiestas* (loosely 'treason'), the primary cause of fear and resentment under Tiberius. The precise nature of this crime is far from clear. In about 100 BC, in response to the mishandling of the campaign against the Germanic Cimbri and Teutones, a *Lex Appuleia de Maiestate* was introduced, apparently intended to punish general incompetence rather than criminal intent. Sulla's later *Lex Cornelia de Maiestate* seems to have been aimed at restraining ambitious army commanders from taking their troops outside their provinces. Sulla's law was replaced by Caesar's *Lex Iulia* (the specific offences dealt with are not clear); its penalty was exile (*interdictio aquae et ignis*), with or without confiscation of property. Caesar's law was modified, or, some would argue, replaced, by an Augustan *Lex Iulia*. Augustus seems to have extended the concept of *maiestas laesa* to cover verbal abuse or slander, and the new *Lex Iulia* thus had a double function.⁷⁶ It was a law to protect the state against sedition, rebellious magistrates and the like. But there was a second element that protected the princeps against real or imagined injuries, the crime we know as *lèse majesté*; attacks against the emperor were now dealt with by the same laws as those concerning the security of the state. By a process not fully understood the penalties grew progressively more severe. Harsh

sentences were rare under Augustus, but they became common under Tiberius, especially after 23, often involving banishment and confiscation of property, the death penalty and even what is now defined as *damnatio memoriae* (the obliteration of the person's name from the public record). Many of the *maiestas* trials under Tiberius seem to have their origin in political or private rivalries, rather than genuine activities against either the state or the princeps. Caligula made a grand gesture in dismissing all current and pending cases, and allowing those already condemned to return from exile. He may even have abolished the actual category of *maiestas*, although this seems unlikely.⁷⁷ Even the dismissal of the pending cases was a remarkably bold move, and vivid evidence of his self-confidence and sense of security at the outset. Claudius made a similar gesture at the beginning of his reign, but his was far less sweeping – he took the precaution of going through the records carefully beforehand to ensure that only those charged unjustly should go free. There is no indication that Caligula made any such preliminary selection in 37.

Caligula went even further. In a magnanimous gesture intended to show that there need be no fear of reprisal, he announced that he felt no malice towards those involved in the earlier attacks against his family, and made a public show of burning in the forum all the papers and letters relating to their cases, swearing solemnly that he had never read or touched any of them. Sceptics might have wondered if the originals were really going up in flames, and Dio in fact claims that Caligula destroyed only copies. The papers involved must, presumably, have been private documents in the possession of Tiberius, rather than of the senate, since the trials had taken place *in camera* before the emperor. There was a precedent of sorts for Caligula's gesture. Augustus found incriminating letters in Antony's strongbox and announced publicly that he had destroyed them, although, like Caligula, he had no scruples about making use of them later. Clearly the famous diabolical question in *The Master and Margarita*, 'Don't you know that manuscripts don't burn?' applies with special force to the early Julio-Claudians.⁷⁸

It seems clear that under Macro's guidance Caligula was seeking to reassure those who felt reservations about elevating an inexperienced and untried young man to the principate, and was perhaps trying to disarm any who felt that their loyalties should lie with Gemellus. The act of allowing Agrippina's supporters to return might have caused this last group some alarm: the destruction of the trial records would to some degree have allayed their concerns. Whether there was in fact anything that could be called a pro-Gemellus party is far from clear. As noted earlier, the only supporter of Gemellus identified in the sources was Flaccus, Prefect of Egypt, who was not even in Rome in 37. But there are certainly hints of machinations directed against Caligula from the very outset. Suetonius records that soon after the accession he made a show of refusing to accept a document containing evidence of some sort of plot against him; he took the position that he had done nothing to make people hate him and he had no time for informers. We cannot rule out totally the possibility that this episode was stage-managed, but it could be an early hint of the kind of discontent that

would manifest itself more openly later in the reign. Only one person is actually identified among those released as a consequence of Caligula's amnesty, Publius Pomponius Secundus. Pomponius was a highly regarded man of letters, a popular playwright, and ranked as one of the great orators of the day in Tacitus' *Dialogus*. He was important enough to merit a biography by the Elder Pliny.⁷⁹ Charged with sheltering Aelius Gallus, probably the nephew of Sejanus, in his garden after the latter's fall, he was imprisoned for seven years, during which he was badly treated.⁸⁰ After his release Pomponius showed his gratitude with a gesture doubtless close to Caligula's heart – he invited the young emperor to a banquet with costly and historic wines. He would later go on to be consul, in 44, and then to command the legions of Upper Germany under Claudius. Among others who would have benefited from the decision not to pursue the *maiestas* cases would have been Annius Pollio, Annius Vinicianus, Calvisius Sabinus and Appius Sianus, whose treason cases were postponed in 32 pending Tiberius' return to Rome (Mamercus Scaurus had committed suicide) (see [Chapter 2](#)). Others would have been Gnaeus Domitius and Vibius Marsus, associated with Albucilla on a charge of impiety against Tiberius in 37, but still untried when the emperor died. The suspension of *maiestas* charges tended to become something of a formality at the beginning of later reigns, and the gesture was more symbolic than practical. In taking such seemingly bold action neither Caligula, nor any other emperor, would have left himself totally exposed to the dangers of sedition – there were other criminal charges that would still offer protection.⁸¹

Caligula's liberality was to extend even further. Certain writings had long been suppressed by senatorial decree, and three authors in particular had gained considerable notoriety by having their books banned – Titus Labienus, Cremutius Cordus and Cassius Severus. Caligula apparently ordered that their works be hunted out and circulated, claiming gravely that it was in his interest to have everything recorded for posterity.⁸² Titus Labienus was an orator of the Augustan period whose vicious attacks on all classes of society had earned him the name of Rabienus ('rabid'). His works were burnt on the orders of the senate; refusing to outlive his writings Labienus had himself walled up in his ancestral tomb. Cassius Severus, according to Seneca, declared that if they were determined to destroy the works of Labienus they would have to burn him alive, as he knew them by heart. Severus was a powerful orator, but enjoyed little success as either defender or prosecutor. Because of his slanderous attacks on distinguished men and women, he was first charged by Augustus under the heading of *maiestas*, and eventually banished to the barren island of Seriphus. He died there in 32.⁸³ The most notorious case of defamatory libel during the reign of Tiberius was that of Cremutius Cordus. He was prosecuted early in AD 25 on the trumped-up charge of publishing a history in which he praised the murderers of Caesar, eulogising Brutus and calling Cassius the last of the Romans. But at the heart of the case against him was the enmity of Sejanus. Cremutius gave a noble speech, defending his actions on the grounds of precedent (apparently even Augustus had heard a recitation of the offending passages and taken no exception to them), and then

anticipated the verdict by committing suicide. Tacitus reports that his books were ordered burnt by the aediles, but that a few copies survived. Cremutius' daughter Marcia was largely responsible for keeping his works safe until they could be published under Caligula, and the melodramatic exit of their author inevitably made the interest in them greater. An expurgated copy was available to Quintilian some fifty years later, still marked by its outspokenness.⁸⁴ It might be argued that the lifting of the ban on these writers was a truly progressive deed. That said, Caligula had not personally been their target, and it is not clear how far he was motivated by genuine liberalism and how far by a cynical desire to draw a contrast with the repressive atmosphere of the previous regime. His reputation in this sphere certainly changed, since he is later even accused of burning alive the writer of an Atellan farce because of a *double-entendre*.⁸⁵

We do have good primary evidence for the image of moderation Caligula was seeking to project when an embassy from a number of Greek states arrived in Rome early in the reign offering Caligula various honours. In the letter that he sent in reply, preserved in an inscription in Acraephia, Boeotia in Greece, Caligula accepted some of the tributes, but asked the Greeks to avoid the expense of setting up an excessive number of statues to him, and to limit themselves to those erected at the sites of the great Panhellenic games, at Olympia, Nemea, Delphi and the Isthmus (of Corinth).⁸⁶

The most intractable problem of this early period of Caligula's reign was the sensitive issue of Tiberius Gemellus. He had been excluded from his inheritance, and there was always a risk that he might nurture a deep resentment. To forestall any potential ill will, Caligula treated him with a great outward show of generosity. He was formally granted the *toga virilis*, and on the same day was adopted by the emperor as his son, co-opted into the Arval Brotherhood, and recognised as *Princeps Iuventutis* ('Prince of the Youth'). This old military title, once applied to the commanders of knights under forty-five on military service, had acquired special significance when conferred on Gaius and Lucius Caesar by Augustus on the occasion of their adoptions. In Gemellus' case it might reasonably be taken as an official recognition that he was envisaged as Caligula's successor.⁸⁷ Philo saw the adoption as a ploy from the outset, intended to put Gemellus under Caligula's authority (*patria potestas*), and also to deprive him of the share that was morally his.⁸⁸ It is difficult not to be cynical. By annulling Tiberius' will, Caligula had robbed Gemellus of his potential and actual birthright for his own personal ends, and it was perhaps hypocritical for him to pretend deep concern for Gemellus' welfare. Also, by designating Gemellus as his heir at this point, Caligula did not concede a great deal, since the emperor was still young and could reasonably expect in time to produce heirs from his own line.

A fragment of the Arval record, covering the activities of AD 38, allows us to add another significant event with some confidence to the first half of 37, since it shows that on June 26 of 38, anniversary sacrifices were held at the altar of *Providentia Augusta* in the Campus Agrippae, almost certainly a repetition of rites that would have been held the previous year. *Providentia* is essentially the power

to plan ahead, and for the early emperors it personified the transmission of hereditary powers, belonging as a quality to the one who chooses the successor in the first place and then, by transference, to the one who succeeds him. In this sense it was first exercised by Augustus, and the *providentia* of Augustus would become an important propaganda element in the transmission of power to Nero, to Galba and to the Flavians. The first commemoration of *Providentia Augusta* took place under Tiberius, as is shown by his coins. A series of asses carries on the obverse the radiate head of Augustus and on the reverse an altar with a panelled door, and the legend *Providentia*. Caligula's rites were presumably carried out to mark the anniversary of either the original founding or the actual dedication of the altar, which is clearly associated with Augustus' adoption of Tiberius, on June 26, AD 4. He was seen to be at pains to celebrate the initial founding of the dynasty, and its transmission from Augustus to Tiberius, thus again belying Dio's notion that he pursued an open policy of denigrating Tiberius.⁸⁹

In March Caligula had been voted an immediate consulship, to be repeated annually, but he tactfully declined the offer until the incumbents had completed their six-month term. His eventual assumption of the office on July 1 (with his uncle Claudius as colleague) was an event of great symbolic importance, marked by the dedication of special statues.⁹⁰ The address that Caligula gave to the senate on the occasion reflected the enlightenment of the early part of his reign. In it he noted certain abuses of the previous regime and gave solemn undertakings that he would never repeat them. The senate was so taken by his promise that they ordered the speech read every year, hoping, Dio notes, to discourage him from changing his mind.⁹¹ It was probably on this occasion that Caligula declared his intentions to publish the financial state accounts, a practice established by Augustus but discontinued by Tiberius.⁹²

Perhaps the most consistent feature of this early phase was the enormous effort Caligula made to forge an identify with Augustus, and thus to confer a legitimacy of sorts on his reign. This Augustan link was an important element of his early propaganda. His earliest gold and silver coin issues include types that bear Augustus' image on the reverse (Figures 4.9 and 4.10). A drachm issued by Caligula in Caesarea cleverly combines the motif of Augustus and of Germanicus, since it carries the image of both (Figure 4.11). His earliest gold and silver coin issues include types that bear Augustus' image on the reverse. The awkward presence of Gemellus made it difficult for him to present himself as the natural successor of Tiberius. Instead, he chose to emphasise his direct descent from his great-grandfather, the founder of the principate. Thus in the following year, on July 4, AD 38, and no doubt in 37 also, where the record is missing, rites were carried out by the Arvals to mark the anniversary of the founding (*constitutio*) by Augustus, on his return from Gaul in 13 BC, of the Ara Pacis, the great monument to peace, and, of course, to the Julio-Claudian family.⁹³ Caligula's most important symbolic act as consul, however, was without doubt the dedication of the Temple of Divus Augustus, which took place over two days, on August 30 and 31, the latter being Caligula's birthday and the last day of his consulship. The coincidence



Figure 4.9 Caligula denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

of birthday and dedication was no coincidence; in 40 he postponed his minor triumph (*ovatio*) to be able to hold it on that same date. The convergence of the anniversary of his birth and the temple's dedication would have emphasised the direct bloodline from Augustus to Caligula.

The Temple of Augustus, located between the Capitoline and Palatine Hills (the structure is discussed in more detail in [Chapter 11](#)), had in fact been decreed immediately after that emperor's death and apotheosis in AD 14 and most, if not all, of the construction must have been completed under Tiberius, since he was able to display paintings of Danae and of Hyacinthus inside it (the latter a particular favourite of Augustus and part of the loot he brought back from Alexandria).⁹⁴ But the fact that it remained undedicated gave Caligula a splendid opportunity for extravagant display. He performed the appropriate ritual, accompanied by a choir



Figure 4.10 Caligula denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)



Figure 4.11 Caligula drachm (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

of noble youths and young women. What is striking, in this early constitutional phase, when he was going out of his way to show moderation and decorum, is that he wore the garb of the triumphator, the embroidered purple cloak from Jupiter's statue in the Capitoline temple, perhaps an early sign of proclivities that would later be given a much freer rein. He thus began a process whereby the triumphal regalia were regularly worn by the emperor on special occasions, especially festivals. Claudius, for instance, wore them at the sacrifice during the dedication of the Theatre of Pompey. Caligula's Augustus dedication was marked by splendid shows, including a two-day horse race and the slaughter of some 400 bears. To celebrate the event a splendid sestertius was issued, depicting Caligula carrying out a sacrifice in front of the temple (*Figure 4.12*).⁹⁵ The obverse of these coins carries the figure of a seated Pietas, draped and veiled, holding a flat



Figure 4.12 Caligula sestertius (photograph courtesy of Andreas Pangerl, www.romancoins.info)



Figure 4.13 Caligula denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

dish (*patera*) in her right hand, and the legend PIETAS below. *Pietas* was a highly emotive concept for the Romans, emphasising the principle of family duty and thus in this instance the idea of Caligula's loyalty to his illustrious forebear. He was able to end his first consulship in a blaze of glory, stepping down with Claudius on September 1, to offer the chance to the previously designated candidates to follow him in office.⁹⁶

The most effective exploitation of Augustan symbolism occurred a few weeks after Caligula had given up his consulship. We are told by Dio that in March he had accepted all the Augustan titles *en bloc*, with the exception of one, *Pater Patriae* ('Father of the Country'), which he postponed for a short time. Dio's observation has been confirmed by an Arval fragment, which shows rites being carried out on September 21, AD 38 (the record for 37, again, is missing), two days before Augustus' birthday, to mark the fact that Caligula *consensu senatus delatum sibi patris patriae nomen recepisset* ('had received the title of *Pater Patriae* offered to him with the consent of the senate').⁹⁷ It may have been to celebrate this event that Caligula issued the sestertius and the gold and silver coins belonging to the early part of his reign with the reverse legend SPQR, *Pater Patriae*, ob Cives Servatos ('for saving the citizens') within an oak wreath (Figures 4.13 and 4.14). The earliest extant use of the term *pater/parens patriae* is in connection with the famous general Marius, who, Cicero claimed, deserved to have received the title. But Cicero was in fact the first recipient, on the suppression of the Catilinarian conspiracy, in addition to which the senate voted that he should also be granted the *corona civica*, the oak wreath bestowed on a soldier for saving the life of a comrade in action.⁹⁸ Appian lists the title among the honours granted to Caesar in 45 BC, and *parens patriae* is attached to Caesar's name on coins of 44 BC. When Augustus received the title he considered it an event of great significance, and in the *Res Gestae* emphasised that the honour was bestowed by the senate and



Figure 4.14 Caligula sestertius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

equestrian order and the whole people: *senatus et equester ordo populusque Romanus universus appellavit me patrem patriae*. Suetonius observes that when the honour was conferred on Augustus a decree was passed that: *senatus te consentiens cum populo Romano consulutat patriae patrem* ('the senate in agreement with the Roman people acclaims you Pater Patriae') and in reply Augustus told the senate that he hoped he would retain to the end *hunc consensum vestrum*. The language of Augustus, with its emphasis on *consensus*, is clearly reflected in the phraseology of the Arval entry that marks Caligula's acceptance of the title.⁹⁹

It was probably on the occasion of the grant of the title of Pater Patriae that we should also assign the golden shield that Suetonius says was voted for Caligula. Every year, on the appropriate day (presumably September 21), it was to be carried to the Capitol by the college of priests, escorted by the senate, while girls and boys of noble families sang his praises. The shield would again remind Romans of the famous shield that was awarded to Augustus in 27 BC. Caligula was probably at the same time granted the *corona civica*. In one of the finest sculptural representations attributed to him, in Copenhagen (*Figure 4.15*), he is depicted as wearing an oak crown, and he also is described as wearing one at the time of the famous crossing of the bridge on the Bay of Naples (*Chapter 11*).¹⁰⁰ The honour of the oak crown was bestowed by the senate on Augustus in 27 BC, and on imperial coins and in inscriptions (including those of Caligula) the crown, shield and title of Pater Patriae are closely associated.¹⁰¹ None of the sources specifically states that Caligula received the oak crown in September but Suetonius does observe that the shield was granted *inter reliquos honores* ('among the other honours'). There are indications that a *corona civica* was a standard fixture on the pediment of the Palatine residence by the beginning of Claudius' reign. Tiberius had specifically not allowed one; hence it could very well have been placed there by Caligula in September 37.¹⁰²

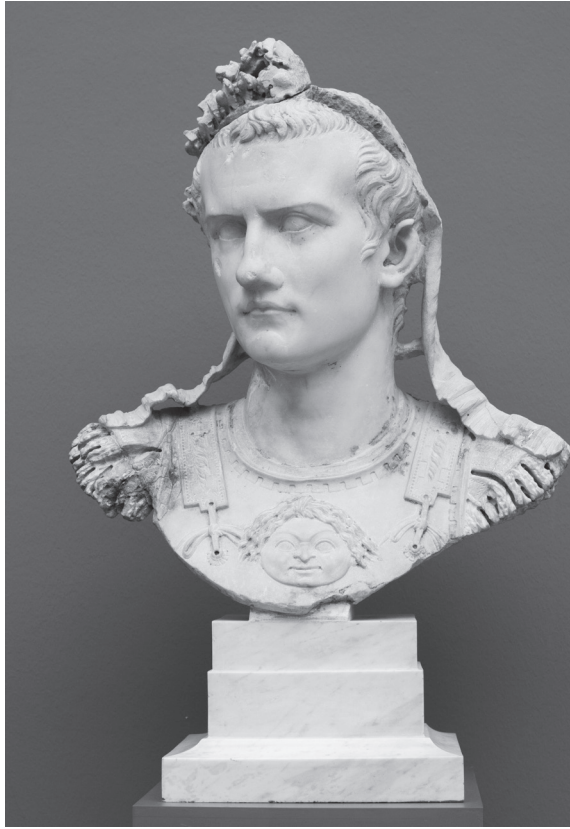


Figure 4.15 Bust of Caligula, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (photo: Ole Haupt)

The first six months of Caligula's reign was a period of near-euphoria. But it exacted an exhausting toll on the young emperor. The strain of being at the centre of power and attention, and the adulation of the masses, would have made enormous demands on his nerves and stamina, coming after a life spent almost totally out of the public view. Hardly was the summer over, when he fell seriously ill.

Appendix: the legal date of Caligula's accession

To attempt to identify the precise day when Caligula became emperor is to enter into something of a scholastic disputation, since all is dependent on definition. In a practical sense he assumed power the moment that Tiberius died, on March 16, AD 37. It was then that Macro wrote to inform the provincial commanders of the change of regime, and then, we assume, that the praetorian guard would have acclaimed him as imperator. It might be argued that the principate could be conferred only by the senate and that Caligula's principate began when that body acknowledged him as imperator, on March 18. But the senate did not on that

occasion confer actual powers. That did not happen until Caligula had reached Rome and had come in person before the body, either on March 28 or 29. At that meeting it seems the senate granted him massive powers through a *lex imperii*. The senatorial decree would not have had the force of law until it was ratified in the popular assembly, at some time in April. All of these occasions could be reasonable candidates for the ‘beginning’ of Caligula’s principate, but the strongest is surely the ratification of his powers by the assembly. Roman emperors dated their reigns by their tenure of *tribunicia potestas*, and it follows that in a very real sense acquisition of that *potestas* marked the beginning of their reign.

The senate was not properly speaking a *legislative* body in Caligula’s reign, since a senatorial decree had to be ratified by the popular assemblies before it became a law (*lex*), although this was usually little more than a formality. By the second century AD senatorial decrees had acquired the force of law, but not in Caligula’s time. Thus for the senatorial decree (*senatus consultum*) conferring Caligula’s powers to become a *lex*, it would need the formality of popular assent. But this could not be given simply by acclamation, and the presence of the people at the senate meeting of March, AD 37 can have been no more than symbolic. The law would need to be passed by one of the popular assemblies (*comitia*), and before this could happen, strictly speaking, a formal period of time, the *trinum nundinum* (very loosely, ‘three weeks’), would have to elapse. Its precise duration is uncertain, but the usual range seems to have been between seventeen and twenty-four days, and the restriction is occasionally ignored (see Hammond 1938; Griffin 1984: 244 n. 91). Now in the cases of Nero, Otho, Vitellius and Domitian, the Arval record specifically mentions the assumption of tribunician power at dates later than the sacrifices *ob imperium*, ranging from eleven to forty-four days (Otho’s was much delayed). These earlier sacrifices must represent the acclamation by the senate. The later date clearly represents the formal passage of the *lex* by the popular *comitia*. Now the priorities for Arval celebration would have varied from reign to reign (see Scheid 1992). But the legal requirements would not: Nero: acclamation, October 13; *comitia*, December 4 (*AEA* 26.14 [Smallwood 19.14–15] see, Mitford 1947: 220–1); Otho: acclamation, January 15; *comitia*, February 28 (*AEA* 40.60); Vitellius: acclamation, April 19; *comitia*, April 30 (*AEA* 40.81–2, 85); Domitian: acclamation, September 14; *comitia*, September 30 (*AEA* 49.28–9, 33–4). In each case the Arval record notes only the *comitia tribuniciae potestatis*, but this need not mean that there was a separate comitial vote of proconsular power, and the terminology presumably represents the pre-eminence of the *tribunicia potestas* (see Kromayer 1888; Parsi 1963: 129).

We can say that Caligula’s adoption of tribunician powers comes at the very least before April 28, since a dedication made at Syene in Egypt on April 28, AD 39 (*ILS* 8899) shows that by that date Caligula was now in his third tribunician year. A more precise clue may, however, be provided by a senatorial decree that the day on which his principate began, *dies quo cepisset imperium*, was to be called the Parilia, to mark that the city had been founded a second time. This decree is mentioned by Suetonius (*Cal.* 16.4) in an undated context but it almost certainly belongs to AD 37 (Wardle 1994: 178. Balsdon 1934b: 166 dates it AD 40). The

Parilia was an old shepherd's festival, traditionally, though, some argue incorrectly, associated with the rustic deity Pales. Originally it seems to have been a festival of purification of the herds and herdsmen, and at some point the rite became associated with the anniversary of Rome's foundation, celebrated on April 21 (Cic. *Div.* 2.98; Varro *RR* 2.1.9; Ovid *Fast.* 4.721–862; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.88; Wissowa 1912: 199–201; Latte 1960: 87–8; Weinstock 1971: 184–91). There was nothing remarkable in the idea of celebrating a great achievement such as the rebirth of Rome. Cicero claimed the Nones of December 63, when the senate decided to take action against the Catilinarian conspirators, to be the new birthday of Rome (Cic. *Flacc.* 102, *de Cons.*, *FPL* fr. 17M). After the murder of Julius Caesar, Dolabella suggested that Rome's birthday should be moved to the Ides of March (Appian *BC* 2.122; 3.35). Similarly, the Assos decree refers to the accession of Caligula as the beginning of a new age, and the same concept of the return of the golden age would be used of the accession of Nero (*IGR* 4.251 [Smallwood 33]; see Sen. *Apocol.* 4.9; *Cal. Sic. Ecl.* 1.42). What is noteworthy here is not the cliché that the beginning of Caligula's reign was seen as Rome's rebirth, but that it was given the name of a pre-existing festival. It seems unlikely that a well-established festival could have been re-dated. In fact this speaks very strongly for April 21 as the date of the formal passage in the assembly of Caligula's *lex imperii*. An analogous situation arose in 45 BC. News of the victory of Julius Caesar at Munda reached Rome on the eve of the Parilia, and it was voted that circus games be held in Caesar's honour as if he were the founder of the city. In Caligula's case the date provides an appropriate intermission of twenty-three or twenty-four days for the *trinum nundinum* after the *senatus consultum* of March 28 or March 9, and such a technical delay before the formal assumption of power would be completely in keeping with Caligula's constitutional behaviour at this early period.

Notes

- 1 Jos. *AJ* 18.225–33; Suet. *Tib.* 75.1.
- 2 Jos. *AJ* 18.234; Suet. *Tib.* 75.2.
- 3 Dio 59.3.7. The request is so placed by Dio in his narrative that it seems to post-date Caligula's arrival (and is so dated by Balsdon 1934b: 28). But the reference to his absence is explicit and makes sense only if the request came from Misenum.
- 4 Philo *Leg.* 23, *Flacc.* 10; Dio 59.1.1. Edmondson 1992: 132 notes that Dio's text could be understood to say that Tiberius had 'in fact' left the principate to Gemellus, rather than 'also'.
- 5 Dio 59.1.2.
- 6 *PIR*² A 32; see Kunkel 1952: 128; Syme 1980: 104. Siber 1933: 42 suggests that a formal senate commission was set up under the authority of the consuls.
- 7 Suet. *Cal.* 16.3.
- 8 Dio 59.15.1; this became a constitution under Antoninus Pius; of course if Dio's words are taken literally as they stand and Tiberius was declared insane, then his will would be legally invalidated on that ground; see Edmondson 1992: 133.
- 9 Suet. *Dom.* 2.3 shows that Vespasian was an exception; Pius may have been another, see Brunt 1966: 78.
- 10 Otho: Tac. *Hist.* 1.81.1; Vitellius: Dio 65.4; see Brunt 1966: 79; Levick 1999: 105.

- 11 Bellen 1972: 100–1 argues that Caligula could have inherited on the basis of the discretionary clause in his *lex imperii*, although Timpe 1962: 73 and Levick 1999: 220 argue that the procedure was illegal. Gemellus may have retained property in Egypt. Hanson 1984: 1114–15 notes that the tax rolls of Philadelphia show property held in 37/38 by the ‘*Kaisares*’, who must surely be Caligula and Gemellus.
- 12 Caligula was the first emperor who had lived the whole of his life in the imperial period, as observed by Wilkinson 2005: 77; 2012: 103.
- 13 Yavetz 1996.
- 14 Suet. *Cal.* 14.1 notes that on the occasion of the senate meeting that followed Caligula’s arrival, no attention was given to the claims of Gemellus. This does not necessarily mean that the will was actually revoked at this second meeting, as argued by some scholars; see Baldson 1934b: 26; Levick 1999: 220.
- 15 Smallwood 3.10, 8.10.
- 16 Crawford 1955: 487–95; on the senate’s role: Cic. *Phil.* 14.5.12; Combes 1966: 76–7. Antony is the only imperator known to have been so acclaimed by the *comitia*.
- 17 Dio 57.8.1.
- 18 Pareti 1952–61: 4.763–4. It is to be noted that although we can be confident that the acclamation occurred, there is in fact no reference to it in the sources, despite the frequent assertions in modern treatments. Nor can it be safely inferred from Tac. *Ann.* 6.50.4, where he refers to the courtiers congratulating Caligula after the death of Tiberius.
- 19 Philo *Leg.* 231; Jos. *AJ* 18.124. Vitellius was in Jerusalem for the Passover, which in 37 fell on April 20. The news had reached Egypt by April 27.
- 20 Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.2, 34.1; Dio 57.3.2. On the oaths, see Herrmann 1968; see also Premerstein 1937: 13–116.
- 21 *IGR* 4.251 (Smallwood 33).
- 22 *ILS* 190 (Smallwood 32). The career of Quadratus is laid out in *ILS* 972.
- 23 Timpe 1962: 65. There survives another oath from Sentinum in Umbria (*CIL* XI 5998a), very similar in content to the Arrium oath in its formulae and perhaps to be assigned to the Caligulan period (see Herrmann 1968: 52–4). This title of ‘Augustus’ is similarly omitted from Caligula’s name on *PRyl* II.141, an Egyptian papyrus dated to April 27, AD 37.
- 24 Hammond 1956: 65; Timpe 1962: 68. Gatti 1980b claims that the senate voted some of his titles on March 18. Jakobson and Cotton 1985 suggest that Caligula was offered the principate on March 18 and went through the motions of a formal refusal. But this is difficult to reconcile with Macro’s immediate instructions to the provincial governors.
- 25 See Levick 1999: 246, n. 4.
- 26 Suet. *Cal.* 13. The first three are familiar pet names. The last had a special resonance for Caligula, since as a child he was known as the *alumnus* of the legions (Sen. *Const.* 2.18.4; Tac. *Ann.* 1.44.1), and he would describe himself as the *alumnus* (Greek *trophimos*) of the senate when he first stood before that body (Dio 59.6.1). On the image of the star as a symbol of accession, see McCormick 1981: 45.
- 27 Philo *Leg.* 10–13, 232, 356; *ILS* 8792 (Smallwood 361); *IGR* 4.251 (Smallwood 33).
- 28 *AEA* 12c.17 (Smallwood 3.15–17).
- 29 *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.19–20). Dio 59.3.7 says that the body was brought in at night, presumably to emphasise disrespect for Tiberius.
- 30 Suet. *Cal.* 14.1: *statim*. Opinion is divided on the date: Grenade 1961: 276; Gatti 1980a: 1060 argue for March 28; Timpe 1962: 16; Ritter 1971: 83; Brunt 1977: 98; Wardle 1994: 151 for March 29; Levick 1999: 220 for March 30; Baldson 1934: 25 ‘within the next few days’. Dio 59.6.1: his figures for Caligula’s age would, by inclusive reckoning from August 31, AD 12, provide a date of March 28. Suetonius suggests that the people had forced their way in. But instances where non-members were prohibited

- from the curia generally seem to involve hostile outsiders (Tac. *Ann.* 3.14.6, 5.4.3); on the prohibition of equestrians: Statius *Silv.* 4.8.60–1.
- 31 *RG* 34; see Grenade 1961: 277; Lesuisse 1961b: 420–1; Alföldi 1970: 79.
- 32 Suet. *Cal.* 14.1; Dio 59.3.1–2. Grenade 1961: 289; Parsi 1963: 84–6, 129. Gatti 1980a: 1060, n. 21 argues that the final granting of *tribunicia potestas* did not occur until after Caligula's return from collecting the bones of his family.
- 33 *ILS* 244; see Mommsen 1887–8: 2.909; Timpe 1962: 75; Parsi 1963: 84–5; Brunt 1977.
- 34 Note, however, the analysis of Augustus' *auctoritas* by Rowe 2013. Dio 53.28.2 speaks of Augustus being exempt from the laws, but Rich 1990: 164 observes that Dio has mistaken a specific dispensation from the law relating to electoral corruption, which banned gifts of money to the plebs as a whole; Liebeschuetz 1986: 355–6 argues that a monarchical role was granted to Augustus in the first settlement in 27 BC; Castritius 1982: 95 places the transition in 23 BC when Augustus was offered a perpetual consulship; Levick 1985: 62–3 suggests that it was with Claudius that the princeps became an emperor with full imperial powers.
- 35 Philo *Leg.* 119, 190; Suet. *Cal.* 22.1, 29.1; Dio 59.10.1–2; Parsi 1963: 108–11.
- 36 Sen. *Cons.* 18.4; Dickey 2002: 63 notes that the *praenomen* was normally restricted to close relatives.
- 37 Lesuisse 1961a: 277 suggests that Claudius could have made a claim to the name 'Caesar' through Livia, who was adopted into the Julian family in Augustus' will (Tac. *Ann.* 1.8.2).
- 38 Suet. *Tib.* 26.2; Dio 57.2.1.
- 39 *SEG* 2.703, Perge (Pamphylia); *ILS* 8789; 8792 (Smallwood 361), Mytilene; *CIL* III 6664, from Jabrud, in Coele-Syria (dubious). On the *praenomen imperatoris*, see McFayden 1920: 44–52; Deininger 1972: 992–7; Syme 1958a: 182–3. The title *imperator* at the end of the name is similarly found only in the provinces: *ILS* 193 (Cordoba), *IGR* 4.1379 (*autokrator*) Koula.
- 40 *RG* 10 and *Fasti*. Dio 54.27.2 is in error in assigning Augustus' assumption of the title to 13 BC.
- 41 Willrich 1903: 115, n. 5.
- 42 Dio 59.3.2.
- 43 Suet. *Cal.* 22.1. On *IGR* 4.1022 (Calymna) dated to Caligula's visit with his father in AD 18, he is called *eusebes* (= *pious*); usage in the Greek east does not, however, signify official sanction. A patently bogus inscription from Cadiz (*CIL* 2.150* Peutingen 527 f.53.v.2) reads: *C. Caesar Plus Castrorum F Pater Exercituum Opt. Max. Caesar*, forged by someone who knew his Suetonius, and even got the order right!
- 44 Sen. *Cons.* 18.4; for 'disturbed', Seneca uses the term *conturbatus*. This has been emended to read *coturnatus* 'wearing the large buskin'. The emendation is ingenious, but *conturbatus* is perfectly good Latin and makes perfectly good sense. Also, earlier in the very same paragraph, Seneca describes Caligula as normally *crepidatus*, hence wearing the *crepida*, or civilian sandal. The unexplained transition from *crepidatus* to *coturnatus* would be awkward. The passage tends to be discussed without reference to the emendation, see Wilcox 2008: 468.
- 45 Malloch 2009: 492–3; see Bruun 2003 for the general topic of imperial nicknames.
- 46 Dio 59.3.1; the reference to his not writing to the senate would refer not to routine communications, but to formal proclamations. He had, after all, written to inform them of the death of his grandfather Tiberius.
- 47 Dio 53.18.4, 63.29.6, 79.16, 80.2.3; Plut. *Galb.* 5.1; see Talbert 1984: 355.
- 48 *CIL* I² 260, *Inscr. Ital* 3.2.243. See Hülsen 1903: 359–60; Buzzetti 1968; Tomei 1993. Fishwick 1966: 193 notes that the phrase *initium muneris* is used to mark the beginning of the quaestorian games on December 2; Salzman 1990: 168–9 suggests that *initium Caiani* may refer to the period of private celebration of Attis at a time when access to

- the Phrygianum, the Vatican sanctuary of Attis and Cybele, was closed because of the building of St Peter's first basilica begun under Constantine, and the rites were temporarily held in the *Gaianum* instead.
- 49 Yavetz 1969: 28.
- 50 Dio 59.6.1.
- 51 Dio 59.4.1, 6.7; *AEA* 12c.40; *SEG* 30.1633 (Paphos); *AE* 1980.638 (Gaul); *ILS* 189 (Vienne, pre-accession), *ILS* 8972 (Smallwood 361) all identify Caligula as Tiberius' grandson, and Dio 59.3.7 concedes that he used the same expression in his first letter to the senate. *AEA* 12d.7 (Smallwood 6.5–7), heavily restored, seems to indicate Arval offerings made on Tiberius' birthday, November 16, AD 38.
- 52 Jos. *AJ* 18.236; Suet. *Cal.* 15.1; Dio 59.3.8. No source explicitly places his remains in the mausoleum. The inscription on his funerary urn (*CIL* 6.885), now lost, agrees in its format, however, with others in the mausoleum. Sen. *Apoc.* 1.2 refers ironically to the Appian Way as the route Tiberius took to heaven. Bickermann 1929: 16–17 suggests that this indicates that someone claimed to have seen Tiberius' apotheosis. Dio 59.3.7–8 plays down the scale of the funeral, to add weight to his arguments that Caligula disrespected Tiberius; see Hurley 1993: 44.
- 53 Dio 60.10.2: Claudius ended the practice.
- 54 Dio 59.9.1. The recent origins of this oath go back to the one taken in 45 BC by the new magistrate not to oppose Julius Caesar's *acta*, which became an annual oath thereafter (Appian *BC* 2.106; Dio 44.6.1). The privilege had been extended to Octavian in 29 BC, and by at least 24 BC the senators, as well as the magistrates, participated in the procedure (Dio 51.20.1, 53.28.1, 57.8.4).
- 55 Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.2, 4.42.3; Dio 57.8.4–5, 58.17.2–3.
- 56 Dio 59.2.1 (cf. 57.24.5) says that he paid the praetorians *euthus* ('immediately'). On *RIC*² 1.32, Eckhel: 1796: 6.221 expresses the suspicion that the coins were minted by Caligula to pay for this donative (see Gelzer 1918: 386). But this seems unlikely. The issue continued as late as 40/1 (*RIC*² 1.48), and the praetorians would probably have been paid in silver denarii rather than sestertii; Sutherland 1987: 69–70 suggests that part of the payment may have been made in sestertii. Ritter 1971: 82 suggests that the coin was reissued at the time of the crossing of the Bridge at Baiae, at which praetorians were present.
- 57 Suet. *Tib.* 54.2, *Cal.* 15.1; Dio 58.22.5; *ILS* 180, 183, 187 (Bergamo). Nero's inscription is lost and now known from copies. Dio 59.3.5 says that Caligula went to collect the remains of both brothers, mistakenly, as Suet. *Cal.* 15.1 indicates.
- 58 Rose 1997: 32.
- 59 *AEA* 12fgh.12–14, 14.1–6 (Smallwood 9.11–15, 10.1–6); Scheid 1980: 221; 2008: 30; *RIC*² 1.12, 18.
- 60 Suet. *Cal.* 15.2, cf Suet. *Tib.* 26.2. The measure is confirmed by a calendar from the Caligulan period discovered at Oxyrhynchus (*POxy.* 55 1984: no 3780), where his name replaces the month Pachon; Scott 1931: 249–51; Maurer 1934: 60; Meise 1969: 94; Hanson 1984: 1010–13; Balconi 1985: 84–7; Rea 1988. Of the month names introduced in Egypt under Caligula, only 'Germanikeios' and 'Kaisareios' lasted beyond the early days of Claudius, in fact until the third century; see Begert 1996.
- 61 Sen. *Ira* 3.21.5; *RIC*² 1.55.
- 62 Philo *Leg.* 41–51; Suet. *Cal.* 23.2.
- 63 Tac. *Ann.* 4.16.6; Suet. *Aug.* 44.3, *Cal.* 15.2; Dio 59.3.4.
- 64 *AEA* 12c.7 (Smallwood 3.7). Suet. *Claud.* 11.2 (with Lipsius' emendation) has Claudius bestow the title, which Suetonius says she refused under Caligula; but see West 1931: 15–17, no 17. Local bronze coins of Corinth (*RPC* 1176) and Thessalonica (*RPC* 1573) of Caligula's reign call her Augusta, the only mints to do so (Trillmich 1978: 104–5, 142, 162–7); Hurley 1993: 48; Wardle 1994: 162.
- 65 Jos. *AJ* 18.236; Suet. *Cal.* 29.1.

- 66 *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.22); Suet. *Cal.* 23.2, Dio 59.3.6. Suetonius adds, almost formulaically, that some claimed that he poisoned her; Guastella 1992: 129–9, 168.
- 67 Suet. *Cal.* 15.3, *Tib.* 54.1; Dio 58.2.8, 59.3.3. The preamble to consular proposals is preserved by Suetonius: *quod bonum felixque sit C. Caesari sororibusque eius* ('may this be good and propitious for Gaius Caesar and his sisters'). The standard formula was: *quod bonum faustum felix fortunatumque sit populo Romano Quiritium* (see O'Brien Moore 1935: 711).
- 68 Suet. *Cal.* 15.3; Dio 59.3.4, 9.2. On Tiberius' accession Valerius Messala had suggested that the oath of loyalty be taken annually; the scheme was not taken up. Herrmann 1968: 53–4 has suggested that the annual oath might have been instituted under Tiberius in 32 after the downfall of Sejanus, in conjunction with the innovation of swearing to uphold Tiberius' *acta*, as well as those of Augustus (Dio 58.17.2). Suetonius preserves the text of the oath of loyalty: *Neque me liberosque meos cariores habeo quam Gaium habeo et sorores eius* ('I shall not consider myself or my children dearer than I consider Gaius and his sisters'). Oaths under Augustus in the provinces had included his descendants or his house (see Wardle 1994: 164–5). Caligula's oath did not specify the sisters by name (Humphrey 1979: 142 n. 53).
- 69 *RIC*² 1.33, imitated in the local types of Ercavica, Spain: *RPC* S467A; Apamea, Asia (with Diva added to Drusilla): *RPC* 2012, 14.
- 70 Jos. *Bj* 2.181, 215–17, *Aj* 18.237, 253, 19.274–5. There is some inconsistency in Josephus' accounts of the awards made by Caligula and Claudius; see Wardle 1992a: 440. See Schwartz 1990: 59–60 for the title. Phil. *Flacc.* 40 notes that he was granted the *ornamenta praetoria* and the right to style himself 'friend of Caesar'.
- 71 Luke 3.1; Jos. *Aj* 18.237; Smallwood 1976: 150.
- 72 The same ritual submission to the Roman symbols of authority would be demanded of Tiridates at the conclusion of the Parthian war under Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 15.29.2).
- 73 Jos. *Aj* 18.102; Suet. *Cal.* 14.3, *Vit.* 2.4; Dio 59.27.3. Unlike Suetonius and Dio, Josephus places the meeting under Tiberius, probably incorrectly, since the important episode is not mentioned by Tacitus in his summary of Parthian events at the end of Tiberius' reign (*Ann.* 6.31–7); on this see Garzetti 1956: 1.211–29; Hurley 1993: 43; Wardle 1994: 156–7.
- 74 Sen. *Tranq.* 11.12; Tac. *Ann.* 11.8.1; Dio 60.8.1. We are given no reasons for Mithridates' imprisonment; Wardle 1992a: 442–3 suggests that the reason might in fact have been that he had not been aggressive enough in protecting Armenia.
- 75 Tac. *Ann.* 11.8–9; Dio 60.8.1; See Willrich 1903: 301; Baldson 1934b: 199–200.
- 76 Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.3–5; for a good summary of the question, see Allison and Cloud 1962: 711–31.
- 77 Suet. *Cal.* 15.4; Dio 59.4.3. Brunt 1984: 469–70 argues that Dio's term *asebeia* may mean something less than *maiestas*. Keaveney and Madden 1998 claim no specific suspension, only dismissal of individual cases, as Suet. *Cal.* 15.4 seems to imply; see Brunt 1984: 469–70; Wardle 1994: 167. Dio's comment under 37 (59.6.3), that he punished those who had plotted against his family, must refer to the later period in 39, when *maiestas* trials were revived.
- 78 Suet. *Cal.* 15.4; Dio 59.4.3, 6.2–3; see Meise 1969: 117.
- 79 Pliny *NH* 14.56; Pliny *Ep.* 7.17.11; (Tac.) *Dial.* 13.3; Tac. *Ann.* 11.13.1, 12.28; Quint. 10.1.98.
- 80 Tac. *Ann.* 5.8.1; Pliny *NH* 14.56; Dio 59.6.2. Dio calls him Quintus, confusing him with his brother, and mistakenly says that he had been arrested seven years after his consulship. Publius in fact held his in 44, Quintus in 41; see Syme 1970: 32; Edmondson 1992: 141; Stewart 1953 suggests that Caligula was still under the influence of the old Sejanus party, knowing nothing as yet of the Prefect's role against his mother.
- 81 Bauman 1974: 19.

- 82 Suet. *Cal.* 16.1 Augustus had been responsible for extending *maiestas* to cover slanderous writings, and Cassius Severus and Titus Labienus were the first to suffer, although there is disagreement about which came first: Sen. *Contr.* 10. pr.4–8 (Labienus); Tac. *Ann.* 1.72 (Severus); see also Volkmann 1969: 206–7 (Severus); Cramer 1945; Hennig 1973 (Labienus).
- 83 Sen. *Contr.* 3. pr.3–6; Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.5; Dio 55.4.3, 56.27.1; Macrobius 2.4.9; Jerome *Chron.* (on AD 32).
- 84 Sen. *Marc.* 1.2–3, 22.4–7; Tac. *Ann.* 4.34; Suet. *Tib.* 61.3; Dio 57.24.2–4. Cremutius: Quintilian 10.1.104; Labienus: Quintilian 1.5.8, 4.1.11, 9.3.13; Cassius: Quintilian 10.1.116–7.
- 85 Suet. *Cal.* 27.4.
- 86 *ILS* 8792 (Smallwood 361).
- 87 Suet. *Cal.* 15.2; Dio 59.8.1. See Willrich 1903: 113; Balsdon 1934: 32; Guastella 1992: 129–30; Lindsay 1993: 81; Hurley 1993: 49.
- 88 Suetonius places the adoption firmly among Caligula's enlightened acts. Philo *Leg.* 25–8 places it after Caligula's illness, just before Gemellus' death. Dio is vague on chronology at this period and may not have known the precise sequence. Absolute certainty is impossible, but an early date seems most plausible. It was not a particularly generous act. Caligula had removed the immediate threat, and any prospects of Gemellus would have lain in the far distant future; see Wilkinson 2005: 18. Pré vost 1949: 43 observes that *patria potestas* would give Caligula the *ius vitae necisque* over Gemellus, and thus the power to eliminate him (see Meise 1969: 117).
- 89 *RIC*² 1.80–81; Scheid 2008: 33; see Charlesworth 1936: 107–32; Béranger 1973: 338–40, 331–52; Fishwick 1987: 1.1.180–3.
- 90 *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.14); *AE* 12c.63; Suet. *Cal.* 15.2, *Claud.* 7.1; Dio 59.6.5–6. A *Tabula Cereata* from Pompeii mistakenly has Caligula and Claudius consuls on June 8, AD 37 (*AE* 1969/70.100).
- 91 Dio 59.6.7 claims that the speech involved personal invective against Tiberius.
- 92 Suet. *Cal.* 37.3; Dio 59.2.6.
- 93 *AE* 12c.65–8. The anniversary of the actual dedication in 9 BC fell on January 30, before Caligula's accession, and thus too early for 37, but it too was celebrated in the following year: *AE* 12b.8–10 (Smallwood 2.8–10).
- 94 Dio 56.46.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.10.8; paintings: Plin. *NH* 35.131.
- 95 *RIC* 1² 111; Dio 59.7.1–4; Claudius: Dio 60.6.9; Alföldi 1970: 143–4; Fishwick 1992.
- 96 The *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.15) indicate a consulship of exactly two months (confirming Suet. *Cal.* 17.1 and *Claud.* 7.1), in contrast to Dio's two months, twelve days. Gallivan 1979: 66–9 notes that the new consuls, Aulus Caecina Paetus and Caius Caninius Rebilus, had probably been designated under Tiberius.
- 97 *AE* 12c.83–6.
- 98 Cicero: Cic. *Rab. perd.* 27; Pis. 3; Plut. *Cic.* 23.6; Gellius 5.6; Caesar: Appian *BC* 2.106; 144. Crawford 1955: 491.
- 99 *RG* 35; Suet. *Aug.* 58.2; see also Dio 55.10.10; *Fasti Praenestini* (Feb. 5); *ILS* 8744a; *ILS* 96. That the title was far more than routine is shown by Tiberius' refusal to accept it for himself, as well as blocking the title of *mater patriae* for his mother Livia (Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.2; Suet. *Tib.* 26.2, 50.3; Dio 57.8.1, 58.12.8). It was applied to him in the provinces, and Dio says that on Livia's death some called her *mater patriae* (*EJ* 10 2.9; Dio 58.2.3).
- 100 Suet. *Cal.* 16.4.
- 101 Suet. *Cal.* 19.2; Dio 59.17.3. Alföldi 1952: 239; Augustus: *RIC*² 1. 29a–30, 40a,b, 78–79b, 277–279, 285, 286, 302, 312, 323, 325, 327–330, 419, 549; Tiberius: *RIC*² 1.57, 63, 69; Sutherland 1987: 63–6; Caligula *RIC*² 1. 19, 27, 28, 37, 46, 53; see Alföldi 1978: 74–5, Fishwick 1987: 107–10.
- 102 Suet. *Tib.* 26.2, *Claud.* 17.3.

SIGNS OF STRAIN

The illness that laid Caligula low in the latter part of AD 37 was clearly a very serious one. The popular reaction to reports of it, both in Rome and throughout the empire, bordered on the manic.¹ Crowds slept in the open outside the imperial residence, waiting for bulletins. The equestrian Atanius Secundus announced that he would fight as a gladiator, and a Publius Afranius Potitus even vowed publicly to give his own life, should the emperor be spared; extravagant offers, although with precedents in similar vows for Augustus' recovery, when, at the time of the settlement in 27 BC, a Sextus Pacuvius vowed his life for the well-being of Augustus, and tried to persuaded onlookers to do the same.² Philo suggests that the illness was the consequence of some kind of nervous breakdown, brought on by the stress of the first six months of the reign, and some modern scholars broadly agree with him.³ Others have sought a more specifically physical ailment. Among recent diagnoses, it has been proposed that Caligula may have suffered from epidemic encephalitis, which leads to symptoms of mental derangement. Another suggestion is hyperthyroidism, which can be triggered by serious stress. The strain of rule could have caused Caligula's thyroid gland to become overactive, thus contributing to his breakdown. But the kind of hyperthyroidism that is triggered by stress is almost invariably a chronic condition and does not disappear after a few months.⁴ Or the illness may have been a viral one that affected the central nervous system, with residual mental symptoms.⁵ All these, and other, speculations about the nature of the illness are in the end unprovable, and, like speculations about Caligula's mental competence, rely on descriptions of symptoms that may not have been well understood at the time and have since been much distorted by the process of source transmission. Nor can we be sure that the illness had any long-term effect. The sources seem to see it as a turning point in Caligula's reign, and Philo implies a causative link between it and his subsequent behaviour. But it can at best have had only a minor direct influence on the course of events, since there is no evidence of any dramatic change in Caligula's behaviour in 37, and his serious excesses and clashes with the senate do not begin until 39.⁶

The precise date of the illness is also uncertain. Philo provides the information that it fell in the eighth month of his reign (mid-October to mid-November) and

that word of it was brought by sailors as they returned to their home ports at the end of the sailing season, traditionally placed at November 11.⁷ If the illness occurred this late it would be difficult to fit Caligula's recovery, and other events recorded for late 37, into the short time remaining in the year. Also, Dio implies that he fell ill not long after his first consulship, which he held up to the end of August. It could very well be that he was struck down very shortly after being acclaimed *pater patriae*, on September 21; for the first week or thereabouts little heed would likely be taken of his indisposition, but when the illness showed no sign of abating the alarm would have grown, and the reverberations of that alarm could have reached Alexandria in mid-October. Then his progress through gradual improvement to final recovery would continue to be brought by sailors right up to the end of the shipping season. There is possibly a clue in the calendar of Egypt. One of the honorific months introduced there by Caligula (it did not survive him) was *Soter* ('Saviour'). This is known to have been the equivalent of the Egyptian Phaophi, which began on September 28 and lasted until October 27.⁸ *Soter* might well have been named because during this month he began his initial recovery, and that initial recovery might, accordingly, be placed in late October.⁹

News of Caligula's return to health was met with joy and relief throughout the empire. Philo reports that the Jews of Alexandria celebrated it with sacrifices.¹⁰ Of course there must have been a few for whom the recovery would have been something of a mixed blessing. The first to feel concern over the turn of events would be those unfortunates who, presumably to curry favour, had offered themselves in return for the emperor's recovery. It is not immediately apparent what their punishment was. Dio says ambiguously that they were obliged to keep their promises. Suetonius claims that the would-be gladiator (he does not provide names) was obliged to fight in the arena several times before being released, while the other was decked in sacred garlands and conveyed through the streets by slaves before being hurled from an embankment. The ambiguity of the language suggests that probably both lives were ultimately spared and that Caligula intended this episode as a public humiliation (not totally undeserved) and a warning against gross flattery.¹¹

The smooth and even course of Caligula's reign took a dramatic turn in the period immediately after his recovery, although the change in his conduct is probably best seen as more an indirect consequence of his illness, rather than the result of its effect on his mental state. Whatever the cause, the spirit of universal good will came to an end. This was made manifest by a series of truly striking events – the enforced suicides of two prominent figures, Caligula's adopted son, Gemellus, and his father-in-law, Silanus, in what seems to have been fairly rapid succession, to be followed some time later by the similar fate of no less than the architect of Caligula's accession, the Prefect of the guard, Macro. A proper understanding of the circumstances surrounding these deaths would be invaluable for an assessment of Caligula's reign as a whole, in that they seem to represent the first serious break in the general mood of consensus and cooperation that marked his early months. Unfortunately, the sources are frustratingly reticent about the

details. We are not even certain about the dates. Suetonius treats Silanus and Gemellus together in a way that might suggest that their deaths occurred within the same general period, although even that is far from certain, while Philo groups all three together. Dio actually places the deaths of Gemellus and Silanus among the last events of 37, immediately after the illness, while Macro's is separated from them and placed at the beginning of 38.¹² Replacements for Gemellus and Silanus in the Arval brotherhood were not made until May 24, AD 38.¹³ But it does seem fairly safe to assume that Gemellus at least was dead before the end of the year, since he was not included along with Caligula's sisters in the vows taken by the consul on January 1.¹⁴ It is difficult not to suspect that the deaths of all three were in some way related, but in the final analysis even that simple premise remains unprovable.¹⁵

The first victim mentioned by Philo and Dio is Gemellus, who at the beginning of the reign had been adopted in an atmosphere of abundant goodwill. Dio says that the charge made against him, late in 37, was that he had anticipated Caligula's death, and had waited for a chance to benefit from his illness. Philo explicitly says that the pretext was involvement in a conspiracy. Suetonius is more anecdotal and less convincing, claiming that Gemellus had a chronic and deteriorating cough for which he took medicine. When the smell was detected it led to the charge that he had been taking an antidote against poison. The outcome was that soldiers were then despatched to compel him to take his own life, and when, in a pathetic (though possibly fictitious) twist, the lad was handed the sword he did not know what to do with it, and had to be helped. It is specifically stated that in Gemellus' case no reference was made by Caligula to the senate; there was thus an *in camera* trial, conducted in the presence of the emperor.¹⁶ Gemellus was probably buried in the mausoleum of Augustus, given that his gravestone was found nearby. As an apparent mark of the contempt that Caligula felt for him at the time of his death, he is not recorded there as the emperor's son: *Ti. Caesar Drusi Caesaris f./hic situs est* ('here lies Tiberius Caesar, son of Drusus Caesar').¹⁷

The suggestion that Gemellus had been taking some sort of antidote (*antidotum adversus Caesarem*) might support the notion of involvement in a plot, and there is a further hint of this in Dio's observation that he was charged with having 'prayed for and anticipated Caligula's death'. We have only the barest outline of events for the period, and it is easy to forget that during the emperor's illness the day-to-day operation of the business of state would still have gone on. The chief executives would, of course, have been the consuls, who could have represented a range of imperial concerns in the senate. But there were many tasks whose terms of reference would not have been so clearly established by precedent. These would have ranged from formal ceremonies, like receiving deputations, to such routines as giving the password to the imperial guard. The presence of the emperor was expected at games, at the theatre, at festivals. We know that Claudius deputised for Caligula at games, but it would have been almost inevitable that, in view of his adoption, Gemellus would, as the emperor's son, have represented him at other innocuous and non-political events. Caligula had been treated as one on whose

shoulders the fate of the Roman world rested. On recovering from his illness he would have discovered the disconcerting truth that no one is indispensable and that things had gone ahead no less smoothly than before. Caligula did not have the equable temperament of the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, happy to notice that his office always seemed to run more efficiently when he was away. The competent management of the empire during Caligula's illness would more likely have engendered resentment. Given the natural suspicion of plots and conspiracies endemic to the age, it might well have been difficult for Caligula to accept that Gemellus' conduct while he himself was off the scene had been dictated by exigent circumstances and not by ambition. It also might have been difficult for him to interpret any support that Gemellus might properly have received during this period as anything other than disloyalty.¹⁸ This could explain Dio's cryptic comment, under 38, that several people owed their destruction to Caligula's illness.¹⁹

The difficult situation would have been aggravated by Gemellus' delicate constitutional position. To the extent that Augustus and Tiberius had established any sort of precedent for the succession, the only possible candidate during Caligula's serious illness would have been Gemellus.²⁰ Admittedly, he was far from being the ideal successor – his age and lack of experience would have told strongly against him. The senate had apparently shown no reluctance in removing him from the succession, and if there was any pro-Gemellus party in that body it must have been small and certainly not vocal. Despite this, however, he would still, as the emperor's son, have been seen as the inevitable candidate. This, of course, is no more than speculation. It is not impossible that Caligula's suspicions were well-grounded, and that Gemellus was indeed at the centre of an embryonic conspiracy, if as a figurehead rather than as an active leader. Even Philo takes the pragmatic line that in a sense it was a good thing that Gemellus had died, since the empire was *akoinoneticon* ('impossible to share') and people were beginning to take sides.²¹ When we are told that early in the reign Caligula refused to give an ear to evidence of a plot, he may have been presenting the public face of the situation, while in reality taking the information seriously. While Gemellus' death does seem, in at least a symbolic way, to foreshadow the serious rift between Caligula and the senate that would follow later, it is interesting that Philo admits that the public generally did not find fault with the emperor for this and the other executions that came in the period following his illness.

Any possible link that might have existed between Gemellus and Caligula's father-in-law Silanus is not now readily apparent. Before Tiberius' death Silanus was held in great honour, to the extent that the emperor refused to try any case on appeal from Silanus' decision and would refer any such appeal back to him. Because of his age and rank he was accorded the privilege of casting his vote first in the senate.²² Philo and Dio say nothing of any specific incident that might have led to his downfall. They seem happy to accept that Caligula simply grew to resent his father-in-law's attempts to interfere.²³ Suetonius, however, relates the anecdote that when on one occasion Caligula set out on a voyage (very likely when he went

to Pontia and Pandateria to seek the remains of his mother and brother), Silanus declined to accompany him because he tended to get seasick, and it was suspected that he stayed behind in order to take over should Caligula be lost at sea.²⁴ In a totally different context Tacitus records that Julius Graecinus, father-in-law of the later governor of Britain, Agricola, was forced to commit suicide for refusing to prosecute a 'Marcus Silanus'. If this is the same Silanus, it implies that he faced a *formal* charge and trial before the senate.²⁵ The anecdote about Silanus' plotting while Caligula was at sea may be a garbled version of one of the charges, which could have involved participation in a supposed conspiracy to replace Caligula with Gemellus. Since Silanus would have been an accessory to, rather than the figurehead of, such a conspiracy, Caligula might not have felt the need to deal with him so swiftly, and could allow the case to go before the senate. Whatever the political or legal background to Silanus' fall from grace, the outcome is clear and straightforward. He committed suicide with his own razor.²⁶

The fear of a plot may have prompted Caligula to think more seriously about the issue of the succession. At all events, at some point before the end of 37 he remarried. His new wife's name is uncertain, perhaps Livia Orestilla, and at the time of the marriage she was already married (or perhaps still just betrothed) to Gaius Calpurnius Piso, who belonged to a family that was still powerful and distinguished and had not apparently suffered from the notoriety of Germanicus' suspected murder; he was an affable individual who later gave his name, although little in the way of true leadership, to the doomed 'Pisonian' conspiracy against Nero in AD 65. Piso's co-option into the Arval brotherhood in place of Silanus on May 24, AD 38, may have been a reward for his compliance in giving up Livia.²⁷ Suetonius reports Caligula's comment that he acquired his wife in the manner of Augustus and Romulus. He was referring, of course, to the fact that they had both snatched their brides from their original husbands (Livia was already married before Octavian married her, and Hersilia was already married [to a Hersilius] before she married Romulus). It is not clear whether Caligula meant this as a clever quip, very much in the Caligulan manner, or a serious attempt to deflect criticism by citing impeccable precedents.²⁸ We do have a hint of her relative standing within the imperial family. According to Suetonius Caligula would give his sisters the place of honour at banquets and relegated his wife to the inferior location.²⁹ Caligula seems to have tired of his new bride, or to have reconsidered the political advantages of his recent marriage, very quickly, and soon divorced her. This happened after a few days, according to Suetonius, who adds that he eventually banished her on the grounds that she took up with Piso again within two years of the marriage. Dio places her banishment after two months, adding that Piso was banished also. Dio must be wrong about the latter, however, since Piso was clearly in favour in May 38, when he became an Arval, and the Arval record shows that he was still in Rome until at the very least June 40 (when the record breaks off). If he was indeed banished after that, the sentence probably has no direct connection to his marriage but is more to do with the poisonous atmosphere of suspicion that prevailed after Caligula's return from the north in

AD 40. The whole incident of the marriage is something of a mystery, since it makes no apparent sense for Caligula to have divorced his wife after a few days. It may be that the two-month figure of Dio is actually the period before the divorce, rather than the banishment, and that she was put aside because she showed no signs of pregnancy.³⁰ But if this reconstruction is correct Caligula was, at the very least, astonishingly impatient, as were most of the emperors, for the protection that an heir was seen to confer. If the facts are as transmitted in the sources, the episode may simply represent his nascent fecklessness, and an early sign of a tendency to behave on personal whims.

The year 38 began on a dramatic note. A slave by the name of Machaon made the decision to seek his fifteen minutes of fame. He entered the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, climbed onto the god's couch, made a number of frightening predictions, then slew a puppy he had brought into the temple, before killing himself.³¹ Machaon may have been deranged, but over the next two years many would doubtless look upon his mad act as an omen of what Rome herself was to suffer. At some point in the first part of that year, a third figure fell victim to Caligula – his most loyal henchman, Macro, compelled, along with his wife, to commit suicide.³² The precise date of his death is uncertain, we know only that he had recently been appointed to a new, and important, office, the prefecture of Egypt, which he did not live to take up. Dio places the death among the early events of 38, and Philo suggests that news of it arrived in Alexandria before the summer of that same year.³³

Macro's fall is particularly problematic. He had been Caligula's staunchest supporter and he would surely have recognised that his own future prospects were closely interwoven with those of the emperor. Philo sees the problem in very simplistic terms, as one arising from Macro's insistence on trying to control Caligula's conduct. As often, the account of their relationship owes a great deal to Philo's own imagination, but it is presumably based in part on what he heard when he was in Rome. Philo attributes noble ideals to the Prefect in his role as Caligula's guide and mentor, giving frank and blunt advice, restraining his excesses in public and even checking him in matters of protocol. Despite Macro's best efforts, Caligula's inclinations pulled him in the completely opposite direction. *Tolmai tis didaskein?* ('Who dares teach me?') was his reaction.³⁴ He was offended by being reminded over and over again how much he owed to the Prefect, and how he had brought the army over to his side after Tiberius' death. As Philo puts it, Macro paid the penalty for his devotion to duty; he performed zealously on Caligula's behalf and his reward was to be punished. In this scenario Caligula was a Wilhelm II tiring of his Bismark, the young ruler impatient over being beholden to anyone older and more experienced. There may be some truth to this explanation, but it can hardly provide the whole picture. Bismark, after all, was allowed to retire to his estates and his collection of fine champagnes. Macro, on the other hand, died.

In his very detailed account Philo gives no hint of any conspiratorial activities by Macro, but we must remember that he was writing a moral tract with emphasis on the perverse character of the emperor. It would not have suited his theme to

acknowledge that one of his victims might to some degree have contributed to his own fate. It is tempting to speculate, and we can do little more than speculate, that Macro was brought down as a result of conspiratorial dealings with Gemellus, and possibly with Silanus and others. Again, his fall may have been the inevitable by-product of Caligula's illness. If, at a critical phase, it was anticipated that Gemellus was likely to succeed soon to the principate, Macro, to judge from previous form, would not have scrupled to manoeuvre himself into a position as potential regent, even though this could be construed as a (temporary) shift of allegiance. The full truth of his 'duplicity' might not have been immediately apparent to Caligula on recovery, but even if it had been, the Prefect's removal would have required the same delicate handling that Macro himself exhibited in the downfall of Sejanus.

The whole issue of Macro's death is further complicated by the earlier affair between his wife Ennia and Caligula. Suetonius simply mentions Macro and his wife among the friends and relatives who were rewarded for their services by a cruel death. Dio says that Caligula compelled the two of them to commit suicide and in addition tainted the Prefect's reputation by scandal, in alleging, among other things, that he had pandered his own wife.³⁵ Both Philo and Dio have Caligula laying charges against Macro and Ennia without providing a specific indictment that would adequately explain their fates. The clouding of the political issue by covering up the disloyalty with accusations of sexual misconduct might have been a deliberate ploy to avoid making public just how precarious Caligula's position had been. It seems clear that actions against the couple were begun *in camera* and that the details were not made public. Macro and Ennia presumably committed suicide before trial to protect their family and estate. It is to be noted that despite Caligula's later reputation for engineering the deaths of prominent individuals to get his hands on their estates, Macro was able to leave enough money to provide an amphitheatre for his hometown of Alba Fucens.³⁶

One of the most intriguing aspects of Macro's case is the possible involvement of the Alexandrian Greek leader Isidorus, a sinister and unscrupulous figure who played an important role in the devastating clashes between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria, Egypt's principal city (Chapter 10). The evidence comes from one of the highly coloured tracts produced by Alexandrian Greek nationalists to which the general name of *Acts of the Pagan (or Alexandrian) Martyrs* is sometimes assigned. These have survived only on very fragmentary papyri comprising the texts of trials before Roman emperors of important Alexandrians who suffered martyrdom to defend the rights of the city. They dwell on their supposed oppression at the hands of their Roman masters, in contrast to the courage and spirit of the Alexandrians, and they are predictably anti-Jewish in tone. While they are based on historical events, the events are much distorted to emphasise the dignity of the accused in contrast to the cruelty of the emperor. In one group of four papyri, the *Acta Isidori*, we have an account of the trial of the ruler Agrippa (probably II), prosecuted by Isidorus and Lampo before Claudius, probably in AD 53. The trial takes place in the imperial gardens in Rome, in the presence of a number of spectators, including women. The charge against Agrippa is not clear, but it

seems to have involved the status of Alexandrian Jews. It failed, and Isidorus and Lampo end up being condemned, the sentence apparently intended as vengeance for the death of Claudius' friends at their hands. The proceedings break down into insults, Claudius calls Isidorus the 'son of a whore' and Isidorus insists that Claudius' mother was Jewish, possibly a snide commentary on Antonia's close relationship with the Judean ruling family.³⁷ One of Isidorus' pleas is that in previous unspecified prosecutions he acted as agent for Caligula, and in this document he is held responsible for the death of an earlier Prefect whom Claudius apparently considered a friend and whose name appears to have been Naevius (hence almost certainly Macro).³⁸

It is difficult to know just what to make of this information, which has the faintly bizarre quality of many of these texts. Philo reports that Macro was a friend of Flaccus, the Prefect of Egypt. Now Flaccus was supposedly an adherent of Gemellus (the only adherent so identified by Philo), and had played a role in the condemnation of Caligula's mother Agrippina. Philo might have added the detail about his supporting Gemellus simply for rhetorical effect; Flaccus had been in Egypt for the past seven or so years and could hardly have had any close direct involvement in political events in Rome. It could be that when Gemellus' star was briefly in the ascendant during Caligula's illness, Macro communicated with the Prefect of Egypt on ways to ensure that in the event of the emperor's death matters could be arranged to their mutual interest. If Flaccus did compromise himself in his dealings with Macro, this could account for his reported utter despondency at the news of the latter's death (Chapter 10). Moreover, if Isidorus had somehow become privy to the communications, we have an explanation for the strange and sinister hold that the leaders of the Alexandrian Greeks supposedly exercised over Flaccus early in 38, and also how they were able to destroy Macro around the same time. It is interesting to note that when Herod Agrippa went to his kingdom in 38, on Caligula's advice he did not take the northern route through Greece, but waited for the seasonal north (Etesian) winds and sailed via Alexandria. Could he have been sent to investigate Flaccus? It is difficult otherwise to find a reasonable explanation for his presence in Alexandria.³⁹

Macro's death and the departure of Herod Agrippa from Rome would have removed the two people who had a steadying influence on Caligula during a crucial period in his reign, when he first began to show the traits that a year or so later would develop into overt autocracy. There is no evidence that he had a close personal bond with Macro's successor, whoever it might have been (the new incumbent is unknown). In fact, after Macro's death Caligula may well have felt that it was dangerous to concentrate control of the praetorians in the hands of a single man, and it was quite possibly at this time that he reverted to the old principle of divided command of the prefecture. None of the sources specifically mentions a formal change but they do refer to praetorian Prefects (in the plural) later under Caligula.⁴⁰

Suspicion of plots would, of course, have brought the euphoric 'honeymoon' period of the early part of the reign to an end. Yet there is no indication that these

early executions caused popular resentment or were thought unjustified. And with helpful guidance Caligula might have retained his good rapport with the senate. But it is difficult to see where he might have found this guidance. It had been the regular practice of Augustus and Tiberius to make use of *amici* (literally 'friends'), as advisors on matters of state, the so-called *consilium principis*.⁴¹ There are only the slightest of hints that such a *consilium* might have existed under Caligula. He called together 'the top men' to hear the announcement of Gemellus' adoption, he would speak to 'close advisors' about the dismissal of the consuls in 39, and on one occasion summoned 'the leading men of the senate' to the palace (reputedly only to dance before them).⁴² But there is no indication that these leading citizens were in a position, either singly or collectively, to offer him frank advice and guidance on a systematic basis and thus to fill the gap left in AD 38 by Macro, after his death, and Herod Agrippa, after his departure for his kingdom. The only senior statesman known to be on close terms with Caligula was Valerius Asiaticus, and there is no reference to his playing any actual role in the regime until just before the emperor's death. We do know that Caligula enjoyed the friendship of Vitellius, the future emperor, while they lived on Capri. They both shared a passion for chariot racing, and Vitellius had a crippled thigh as the result of an accident he suffered when riding with his friend. But it is unlikely that at this stage the young Vitellius could have assumed the role of political advisor. The suffect consuls for 38, Sextus Nonius Quintilianus and Servius Asinius Celer, would presumably have been designated by Caligula personally, and the latter might at any rate have been on relatively close terms with the emperor, since he was the son of Gaius Asinius Gallus and Vipsania, the former wife of Tiberius. Gallus was reputed in his later years to have been the lover of Agrippina, and they perhaps hoped to marry, which might have created a bond between their sons. The one recorded achievement of Asinius during Caligula's reign, apart from the consulship, suggests that he did have one thing in common with the emperor – wild extravagance. It is claimed that he once paid 8,000 sesterces for a single mullet.⁴³

Probably Caligula's closest friend still in Rome, however, was Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, someone who enjoyed a unique status, as husband of the emperor's favourite sister, Drusilla, and, according to Dio, as a man who was Caligula's lover. Drusilla had first been married in 33 to Lucius Cassius Longinus, the consul of 30 (possibly the prosecutor of their brother Drusus). At some point they were divorced and she subsequently married Marcus Lepidus, probably at the behest of her brother. Caligula at that point had no children of his own, and after Gemellus' death there was no other obvious successor from within the imperial family. According to Dio, Lepidus was publicly marked by the emperor to succeed him, and was allowed to stand for office five years earlier than legally permitted.⁴⁴ During Caligula's serious illness, according to Suetonius (no other source mentions this), it was Drusilla who was designated as heir to the emperor's estate and the empire, *bonorum* and *imperii*. Possibly, if Caligula suspected disloyalty on the part of Gemellus and his supporters, he sought to thwart any possible move by designating a different heir and potential successor, an indication of how

isolated in his position of power he might have felt. But he would have known that there was no prospect whatsoever of a woman becoming princeps.⁴⁵ The tradition may have become confused by the special status of Lepidus, and it was possibly he, as Drusilla's husband, who was designated in the will as successor. Lepidus is the only one of the husbands of the three sisters to attract any attention in the sources; there is no indication of Caligula's even acknowledging the existence of Domitius Ahenobarbus and Marcus Vinicius, husbands of Agrippina and Livilla respectively. Neither is mentioned in Suetonius' *Life of Caligula*.⁴⁶

While Lepidus' antecedents are not known in precise detail, he clearly had powerful family connections. He was descended from Lucius Paullus Lepidus, a distinguished friend of Augustus. Paullus' eldest son married Augustus' granddaughter Julia Minor (and went down with her when she was disgraced in a scandal in AD 8). Their daughter Aemilia Lepida was at one time betrothed to Claudius but with her mother's disgrace this was broken off. Paullus' younger son, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, was consul in AD 6, and it was said that Augustus considered him (as well as Lucius Arruntius and Asinius Gallus) as a potential successor, remarking that he had the capacity for rule but not the desire.⁴⁷ Marcus' daughter, confusingly also called Aemilia Lepida, married Caligula's brother Drusus, and there is general agreement that Marcus' son was the Marcus Aemilius Lepidus who married Drusilla.⁴⁸ This Lepidus would legitimately have entertained lofty ambitions on the basis of his family connections.⁴⁹ We know nothing whatsoever of his life or offices before his marriage with Drusilla, nor even how old he was at the time. But he certainly did well from the marriage, enjoying an accelerated career and a special relationship with the emperor.⁵⁰ A very striking piece of evidence for this privileged status comes from the city of Aphrodisias. In a statue group of the imperial family from the *Sebasteion*, a shrine associated with the imperial cult, there is a surviving base for the statue of a Marcus Lepidus.⁵¹ In the same group are bases for Germanicus and Agrippina, the latter securely dated to Caligula's reign, and all three, on the grounds of letter style, of the same period. Thus Lepidus' position was so widely acknowledged that his intimate ties with the imperial family were recognised even in the provinces. It is unfortunate, then, that the only Roman whose word might have carried some weight with Caligula entertained ambitions of his own and would probably be reluctant to risk the emperor's displeasure by encouraging him to restrain his penchant for autocratic behaviour.

There was no shortage of close acquaintances at the lower end of the social scale. Caligula is said to have enjoyed the company of gladiators and actors. His most readily identifiable intimates, however, were the imperial freedmen, and it was during his reign that this group first began to enjoy a position of power and influence.⁵² Slaves and freedmen tended to pass down within the same home.⁵³ They, more than any other class, represented continuity from emperor to emperor, and they were thus able to make themselves more or less indispensable. The most important of these in Caligula's case was Callistus, a man who inspired great fear and amassed enormous wealth from his position, and may even have pandered

his own daughter, Nymphidia, as a way of gaining influence over the emperor. Many years later, there was a rumour that Nymphidius, an unsuccessful claimant for the principate in AD 68 following Nero's death, was the son of Caligula and Callistus' daughter, a rumour that Nymphidius did nothing to dispel. Callistus is seen offering advice on crucial issues, such as the suspected conspiracy near the end of Caligula's reign.⁵⁴ The remarkable career attainable by a freedman is illustrated by the case of Tiberius Claudius Etruscus (the name is very uncertain), who came as a young slave from Smyrna to Tiberius' court and gained his freedom under that ruler. He was inherited by Caligula and considered important enough to accompany him on his northern expedition. He went on to receive further promotion from Claudius and was made financial secretary (*a rationibus*) by Nero (probably succeeding Pallas in that office in 55). Granted equestrian status by Vespasian, he finally died under Domitian at the age of ninety. We know of no specific advice that Tiberius Claudius may have offered Caligula, but he was apparently able to exercise a moderating influence on him, and is likened by the poet Statius to an animal trainer who controls a savage beast.⁵⁵

Another freedman, Helicon, makes his first appearance in AD 40 in Philo's account of the initial reception of the Jewish embassy that Philo headed from Alexandria. By this time he was well established in the household. He was the leader of a large group of Alexandrian Greeks in Caligula's service (Philo loosely calls them 'Egyptians'). His first master, according to Philo, had given him a smattering of education and handed him over to Tiberius, which did little to advance his career thanks to that emperor's distaste for childish jokes. He then passed to Caligula, and saw an opportunity for rapid advancement, and developed great skill at clever witticisms, especially quips with a malicious sting, ones combining accusations with ridicule. He was soon inseparable from the emperor. In Philo's coloured account (our only source of information on him) Helicon played ball with the emperor, exercised with him, bathed with him, had his meals with him, and was with him when he retired for the night. He became chamberlain (*katakoimistes*) and even supervised the palace guard. Philo alleges that he saw the Jews as an appropriate butt of his kind of humour, and prejudiced Caligula against Philo's delegation in return for bribes from the Alexandrian Greeks. Philo also blames him, along with Apelles, for later encouraging Caligula in his scheme to set up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem (see [Chapter 10](#)). Helicon was eventually executed by Claudius for various unspecified crimes. Two other freedmen are known from this period. Homilos is said to have been in charge of embassies, at the time when Philo's Jewish deputation tried to see the emperor. Perhaps most sinister of all was Protogenes, who appears towards the end of the reign as Caligula's chief agent in his bloody campaign against the senate. It may be tempting to attribute many of the woes of Caligula's reign to the excessive influence of these freedmen, but it is in fact very difficult to penetrate the solid wall of prejudice against them, and to quantify with any precision their impact on events.⁵⁶

With his brothers and parents dead, and without a compatible wife, it might be expected that Caligula would look for close companionship from his three sisters.

The enormous favours that he heaped on them at the beginning of his reign had a political purpose, but they could also reflect a genuine family affection. There were claims, however, that more than simple affection was involved. The reports of incest are to be treated with considerable scepticism. Suetonius claims that it occurred with all three sisters and asserts that Caligula was actually caught with Drusilla when they were staying at Antonia's house; but he admits that the story is hearsay. Dio observes that he had improper relations with Agrippina and Livilla. The fourth-century historian Eutropius even claims that he had a daughter by one sister, a claim found also in the Byzantine encyclopedia the *Suda*.⁵⁷ But neither Seneca nor Philo, contemporaries of Caligula, who both generally adopt a highly moral tone, make any mention of incest in their writing after Caligula's death, when it would have been safe to do so. Seneca's own dalliance with at least one of the sisters might have discouraged him from raising the topic, but Philo would have been under no such pressure. Also, when Tacitus deals with Agrippina's later reputed incestuous designs on her son, the emperor Nero, he makes no hint of any earlier improper relationship with her brother – although the context was certainly appropriate – and attributes her moral corruption to her association with Lepidus.⁵⁸ It seems very unlikely, then, that in the missing books of the *Annals* he implicated Caligula. The charge of incest has been traditionally levelled against despots, from antiquity to Napoleon. The mother is the usual partner, but, as Willrich observed, since the mother was not available to be blamed in the case of Caligula, the sisters could be called upon to fill the role.⁵⁹ The noted wit Passienus Crispus, who accompanied Caligula on one of his journeys, was supposedly asked by him if, like the emperor, he had been intimate with his sister. Passienus diplomatically replied 'Not yet.' Apart from illustrating Passienus' mental agility, the story also suggests that the rumours of Caligula's incest may have arisen from the emperor's own jocular remarks. It is interesting that, presumably through a textual corruption, the story of Passienus as it appears in the manuscripts is told not about Caligula but about *Nero* (who had no sister), indicating that in the mind of the copyist almost any unpopular emperor was considered a suitable target for this kind of gossip. It is also worth noting that the conversation, although described in such detail, supposedly took place in private, *nullo audiente*.⁶⁰

Suetonius asserts that Caligula felt a special bond with Drusilla, but did not show the same affection to his other sisters.⁶¹ Allowance must of course be made for the simple fact that the other sisters survived, to be involved in a conspiracy of some sort in 39, and the resulting antipathy might well have coloured the tradition about their earlier relationship. But of his devotion to Drusilla there can be no doubt. Hence, Caligula, who had already suffered a series of family tragedies, was in 38 dealt his most grievous blow yet, when, on June 10, Drusilla died.⁶² He was devastated, and the reported reaction to her death was, in the view of some, so bizarre that it must have been inspired by oriental precedents. But while his grief may by some standards seem excessive, his behaviour nevertheless was in fact within the bounds set by Roman tradition.⁶³ Drusilla was granted a public funeral. Caligula was too overwhelmed by anguish to attend, and the eulogy had

to be read by her husband Lepidus. Caligula went first to his villa in the Alban Hills near Rome, then he moved on to Campania and Sicily, showing his grief by not cutting his hair or beard. It was presumably while in Syracuse that he held 'Athenian games', perhaps in connection with the rebuilding of the city walls and temples. There is no need to doubt that his sorrow was genuine; only Seneca is sceptical, commenting cynically that to deal with his supposed grief Caligula found his chief solace in gambling and other such self-indulgences.⁶⁴

A *iustitium* (a period of public mourning) was proclaimed, when business came to a halt and public and private amusements were banned, as had happened on the deaths of other members of the imperial family. In Drusilla's case it was observed in other parts of the empire too, since we know from Philo that Jews closed their shops in Alexandria.⁶⁵ Individuals who neglected to show the proper respect supposedly stood at some risk – one man who sold hot water (for adding to wine) was convicted. The grounds are not specified. Dio claims that the charge was *maiestas*, but that particular charge was technically in abeyance at the time, and a lesser prosecution is more likely. In fact the Arval record shows life continuing.⁶⁶ Celebrations were held that summer to mark the anniversary of Caligula's first consulship (July 1), his birthday (August 31) and the anniversary of the assumption of the title *Pater Patriae* (September 21). The actual implementation of the *iustitium* was clearly far less severe than Dio would have us believe.

The honours granted Drusilla were formally voted by the senate, in accordance with precedent.⁶⁷ In fact, they were not in themselves extraordinary in Roman terms. What is striking is that they were granted to a person of so little political significance. But this does not, in itself, indicate that Caligula was deranged, or under the influence of eastern practices, any more than Queen Victoria in erecting grandiose and grotesque monuments for the late Prince Albert. The distinctions that had previously been voted for Livia after her death were bestowed on Drusilla. We know that in Livia's case the senate had ordered mourning for the women, and had voted the unparalleled (for a woman) distinction of a memorial arch, and Drusilla was presumably granted the same honours.⁶⁸ In addition, however, she received a privilege that Tiberius had specifically vetoed in the case of his mother. Once the period of mourning had ended it was decreed that she was to be deified. She thus became the very first woman to be consecrated and worshipped as a goddess in the actual city of Rome. But even this seemingly groundbreaking measure cannot, in fact, have been totally alien to the Roman mind. Clearly the senate had been quite willing to grant divine status to Livia, even taking the initiative to do so, otherwise Tiberius would hardly have felt the need to prohibit it. Also, if the deification of a female member from within his own family was Caligula's innovation, he was certainly imitated by his successors, as evidenced by the apotheosis of Livia in 42, of Claudia, daughter of Nero, in 63 (she was deified by order of the senate with a temple and a priest), and of Nero's wife Poppaea, in 65.⁶⁹ Again, what is perhaps most significant in Caligula's case is not the consecration of a woman, but of a woman of such little formal status or achievement. Livia had, after all, occupied a prominent, if indirect,

position in Roman affairs for over half a century. Drusilla's sole achievement was to be Caligula's sister, with a potential role in his plans for the succession. By deciding to elevate her to the status of goddess, Caligula demonstrated an increasing egocentricity, a conviction that the state as an institution was designed to serve his own personal needs, rather than what communal interests might dictate.

If the generally accepted restoration of the text of the Arval record is correct, Drusilla's consecration probably took place on September 23, which would create a link with Augustus, whose birthday fell on that date.⁷⁰ Technically, of course, the consecration had to be preceded by proof of divinity. In the case of Augustus a certain sharp-eyed Numerius Atticus claimed to have seen the late emperor's soul ascend to heaven, to which he had to swear an oath and for which he was rewarded by a payment of a million sesterces. In Drusilla's case a similar feat of visual acuity was performed by Livius Geminus, who was paid the same amount.⁷¹ Next, a golden effigy was ordered for the senate house, and in the Temple of Venus in the forum a statue of Drusilla was planned. It would be on the same scale as Venus', and be honoured by the same rites. The temple in question would almost certainly have been that of Venus Genetrix in the forum Iulium, appropriate because of that goddess' role as the founder of the Julian line. A common cult name of Drusilla in the east was 'New Aphrodite'.⁷²

In her divine capacity Drusilla was included in oaths, similar to the ones already made to the deified Caesar and Augustus. Caligula, according to Suetonius, required women to swear to her by name, and included her whenever he personally swore an oath, even at the public assemblies and before the soldiers. The extension of this honour to a woman may have been an innovation but, again, Claudius would honour Livia in a similar way.⁷³ Drusilla was also to have her own personal shrine with twenty priests of both sexes.⁷⁴ In establishing this personal priesthood, Caligula seems once more to have adapted an Augustan model, the *Sodales Augustales*, a body charged with the worship of that emperor. Even the use of both male and female priests was not without precedent, since Livia had been made a priestess of Augustus under Tiberius, as had Antonia under Caligula.⁷⁵ We know nothing further about Drusilla's priesthood, since after Caligula's death the college was apparently disbanded.

Caligula declared that Drusilla was to receive divine honours in every city in the Roman world, and to receive the name of Panthea ('all-embracing deity'). The use of this cult name is unexplained – it is in fact quite commonly found, attached to a number of gods, both male and female. Its connection with the imperial house is suggested by an undated inscription from Gillium in Tunisia '*Pantheo Augusto sacrum*'.⁷⁶ There is widespread evidence of divine honours throughout Italy and the empire, and since they greatly outnumber those for her sister Livilla (Agrippina is not statistically relevant, since she would receive many such honours by virtue of being the wife of Claudius and mother of Nero), we must assume that most, if not all, followed her death and consecration.⁷⁷ In Egypt the month of Payni (May 26 to June 24) was renamed Drusilleios, in accordance with the

common practice there of renaming months after the imperial family. The new name was dropped soon after Caligula's death.⁷⁸

Birthdays were a very important occasion for the imperial family, in large part because of their close association with the *genius* of the princeps (see [Chapter 9](#)). Not surprisingly Drusilla's birthday was accorded special status. In 38 it was to be celebrated on the lines of the Megalesia, a two-day festival held on April 4 and 5 to mark the arrival of the goddess Cybele in Rome, when the senators and knights traditionally sent out mutual invitations to dinner banquets.⁷⁹ The choice of Cybele's festival is not easy to explain, but this goddess was given important status by Augustus, and when her Palatine temple was destroyed by fire in AD 3 it was rebuilt by him.⁸⁰ The fact that the Megalesia was a two-day festival would also be an attraction, since Augustus' birthday celebrations similarly extended over two days.⁸¹ We have the account of the way that Drusilla's birthday was marked in what is almost certainly the following year (the month is uncertain).⁸² The events lasted two days. On the first there were horse races, and 500 bears were slain, while 500 elephants met their end on the next day (both the games and the slaughtering of animals echo Augustus' birthday celebrations). There were athletic contests, public feasts, and gifts for senators and their wives in the tradition of the Megalesia. The climax of the festivities occurred when the image of Drusilla was brought into the circus on a carriage drawn by elephants. There were Roman precedents for this also. In 45 BC Caesar was granted the distinction of an ivory statue carried in a chariot at the games, and similar honours were granted, after their deaths, to other members of the imperial family, such as Germanicus (and later to Claudius' son Britannicus).⁸³ The original inspiration for the elephant cart in fact probably came from Hellenistic models, such as the famous procession arranged in Egypt by Ptolemy II, in which the figure of Alexander the Great appeared in an elephant-drawn carriage.⁸⁴ But it cannot be used to confirm Caligula's supposed Hellenistic obsession; it had been used in processions in Rome from the time of Pompey, and among the divine honours voted for Augustus was a chariot drawn by elephants.⁸⁵ Early in January 40 it was decreed that the birthdays of Tiberius and Drusilla should henceforth be celebrated in the same manner as Augustus'. Tiberius had in fact during his lifetime played down the celebration of his own birthday. It seems to have been marked by Arval sacrifices, but when ten horse races and a senatorial banquet were proposed, he firmly turned the offer down, although reluctantly allowing the addition of a single two-horse chariot to pre-existing games that happened to coincide with his birthday.⁸⁶ The restrained level of Drusilla's subsequent birthday celebrations after the extravagance of the original anniversary shows that once Caligula's initial bout of grief had abated, the treatment of his dead sister was kept within reasonable bounds. It is also striking that Caligula honoured Tiberius' birthday with greater distinction than his predecessor had himself been prepared to countenance.

Caligula married for a third time in the course of 38.⁸⁷ At what point in the year this happened is uncertain. After describing the death of Drusilla, Dio notes that a 'few days later' the emperor married Lollia Paulina, which is presumably

meant to be taken as a few days after Drusilla's consecration and end of the *iustitium*, thus probably just after September 23. The third wife belonged to a wealthy and distinguished family, possibly from Pompeii. She was the sister-in-law of Valerius Asiaticus, one of Caligula's close friends, who may well have promoted the match.⁸⁸ She was also a fine-looking woman, whose good looks went back at least three generations, according to Suetonius. Indeed Caligula was reportedly first encouraged by reports of her appearance (implying that he had not actually met her), although he may also have been attracted by his increasingly difficult financial situation, since she was a woman of great inherited wealth. The elder Pliny saw her at a modest dinner party, covered with emeralds and interlaced pearls over her head, neck and fingers, the total amounting to forty million sesterces. She was pleased to impress, and for those who doubted that such wealth could belong to one woman, she reputedly carried the purchase receipts around with her. There was a modest obstacle: she was already married. Her husband, Publius Memmius Regulus, had been suffect consul of 31, and in the office played a leading role in bringing down Sejanus. At the time of Caligula's wedding he was governor of Moesia, Macedonia and Achaëa, to which he had been appointed in 35, and where he would stay until 44. As his previous marriage had shown, Caligula's approach to the institution was far from conventional.⁸⁹ Suetonius says that Memmius was called from his province to participate in the ceremony, to which Dio adds a very curious comment. He says that Caligula forced Memmius personally to give his wife in marriage to Caligula, in case she be 'improperly married, contrary to the laws (*nomous*)'. It may well be that Dio intends *nomous* in the sense of 'customs' rather than formal laws. There were precedents for the role that Memmius played. The distinguished statesman of the late republic, Marcus Porcius Cato, divorced his wife Marcia and made her available to his close friend, the famous orator Quintus Hortensius, and in return for his consent his former father-in-law Philippus insisted that Cato join him in giving Marcia away. More recently, Tiberius Claudius, Livia's first husband, had given away his former wife to Octavian.⁹⁰ The account of Memmius' participation may well simply be a garbled version of some jocular comment by Caligula about how appropriate it was for Memmius, the former husband, to be present to give away his own wife. We know that Memmius was in the city by September 23, AD 38, when he participated in the Arval rites, possibly because he had been summoned from his province for the wedding, as Suetonius suggests, an eager compliance that would cause him embarrassment later.⁹¹

Memmius came from a simple provincial background (he may have originated from Gallia Narbonensis, southern France), and, according to Tacitus, his modest demeanour, and lack of wealth and family distinction, worked to his advantage, since ambitious contemporaries did not look upon him as a potential rival.⁹² He was suffect consul from October 1, AD 31, a crucial appointment because of the Sejanus ouster, a sign of the high trust in which Memmius was held by Tiberius, although he was criticised by his consular colleague for his lack of zeal during the events. The wedding of his ex-wife seems not to have done his career any

harm. He retained his governorship until his provinces were eventually handed over to the senate in 44. In 40 he was ordered by Caligula to bring the famous statue of Zeus from Olympia to Rome. He supposedly delayed carrying out the order, conduct which would have cost him his life had it not been for that familiar salvation of so many successful Romans of the time – the opportune death of the emperor.⁹³ This last-minute reprieve, thanks to the death of the emperor, tends to be a topos of Caligula's reign, and such stories should in most cases be viewed with some suspicion.⁹⁴

Late in 38, during the Jewish feast of the Tabernacles towards the end of October, the governor of Egypt, Aulus Avillius Flaccus, was arrested (see [Chapter 10](#)). We are given no information in the sources whether he was charged after his return with poor administration and failure to quell the riots that had broken out there, or whether the case was purely political.⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that after his arrest the charges were supported by his new enemies, Isidorus and Lampo, who not much earlier had supposedly been treating him as a close friend and benefactor. The presence of these two adds weight to the possibility that Isidorus might earlier have become privy to dealings between Macro and Flaccus, which Caligula might have used first to bring down Macro and which were now being turned against Flaccus.⁹⁶

Flaccus was condemned and his property confiscated, but, through the intercession of Lepidus (we know nothing of the actual connection between the two men), he was exiled to the relative comfort of Andros rather than to Gyarus, possibly the bleakest of the islands of exile. The fact that he did not receive the death penalty suggests that the evidence at this stage did not extend beyond a general association with Gemellus and Macro, and did not indicate active involvement in a supposed conspiracy. The intervention of Lepidus is striking, and our total ignorance otherwise of his links with Flaccus is a great handicap, since the arrest was in some ways a prelude to the repression that was to fall upon Rome in the following year, and which would ultimately lead to the deaths of Flaccus, and of his ally Lepidus.

Notes

- 1 On the illness: Philo *Leg.* 14–21; Suet. *Cal.* 14.2; Dio 59.8.1–2; Guastella 1992: 123–4.
- 2 Suet. *Cal.* 14.2, 27.2; Dio 59.8.3. On Augustus: Dio 53.20.2, who mentions that it was a Spanish custom, cf. Val. Max. 2.6.11; Néraudau 1998 claims that the episode refers to the archaic practice of individuals vowing their own lives to secure their rulers' lives.
- 3 Inter alios: Baldson 1934b: 36; Sutherland 1951: 115; Piganiol 1954: 248; Smallwood 1970: 164.
- 4 Information: James R. Hurley, Emeritus Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College. It might be argued that in addition Suetonius and Pliny describe Caligula's eyes as hollow. That in itself is not, however, necessarily significant: hyperthyroidism caused by stress is accompanied by exophthalmia (bulging of the eyes) in only about 10 per cent of cases.
- 5 Sandison 1958 (epidemic encephalitis); Katz 1972; 1977 (hyperthyroidism); Massaro and Montgomery 1978: 894–909 (viral); Benediktson 1989, 1992 argues for interictal

- temporal lobe epilepsy. For a summary of the symptoms, Cilliers and Reteif 2001; the whole topic is very usefully surveyed by Sidwell 2010.
- 6 Among scholars who believe that the illness was the cause of Caligula's erratic behaviour: Charlesworth 1934b: 656; Passerini 1941: 10; for criticism of the view, see Morgan 1973; 1977.
 - 7 Vegetius 4.39 on the sailing season.
 - 8 Tait 1930: 118; Scott 1931: 246–9; Balconi 1985: 87–8; see also Samuel 1972: 177; Bickerman 1980: 48; Jones 1999: 316. 'Soter' must be distinguished from 'Soterios' (= Egyptian Payni). It was in use by at least October 20, AD 38 (*BGU* IV. 1078).
 - 9 Dabrowski 1972: 164 sees a vow recorded by the Arvals on January 7 *pro salute* (Smallwood 1.15) as an indication that he was still unwell at this date; see Wardle 1998: 113–14.
 - 10 Philo *Leg.* 356.
 - 11 Suet. *Cal.* 27.2; Dio 59.8.3. Lugand 1930: 10 argues that the death of the gladiator was a human sacrifice, in traditional form, for the protection of the emperor; see Ville 1981: 130–1; Barrio de la Fuente 1994. Néraudau 1998 argues that Caligula revived an ancient practice of the elimination of a scapegoat. He claims that Afranius committed a religious crime; Caligula could have given his pardon in his role as pontifex maximus, but chose not to. He may be correct in arguing that Caligula insisted that the vow be kept as ritual demanded, but the language of Dio and Suetonius is far from explicit.
 - 12 Philo *Flacc.* 16, *Leg.* 23, 65; Suet. *Cal.* 23.3; Dio 59.8.1, 4–6, 10.6; Wardle 1998: 114 suggests that Silanus and Gemellus might in fact have died in early 38.
 - 13 *AFI* 12c.34–35.
 - 14 Suet. *Cal.* 15.3; see [Chapter 4](#).
 - 15 See Wardle 1994: 221–3; Néraudau 1998 suggests that Marcus Junius Silanus and Gemellus were scapegoats.
 - 16 Philo *Leg.* 23–31; Suet. *Cal.* 23.3; Dio 59.8.2. Dio's explicit comment that no reference was made to the senate is reflected in Suetonius' *repente* and *inopinantem* to describe the circumstances of Gemellus' death.
 - 17 *ILS* 172.
 - 18 Ferrill 1991: 105 recognises the same background circumstances, but suggests that it was Gemellus, Silanus and Macro, rather than Caligula, who had problems adjusting to the changed circumstances after his recovery.
 - 19 Dio 59.10.8.
 - 20 This may not, of course, have been Caligula's intention. Wardle 1998: 114–15 points out that he probably had no real place in Caligula's plans for the succession.
 - 21 Philo *Leg.* 68.
 - 22 Dettenhofer 2003: 188. We do not know Silanus' age at death. Balsdon 1934b: 38 feels that he must have been elderly; Scheid 1975: 203 says he must have been fifty at the time of his consulship (AD 15); Syme 1981b: 201 n. 89 feels that he need not have been particularly old.
 - 23 Philo *Leg.* 62–5; Dio 59.8.5; cf. Sen. *Apoc.* 11.2. Dio seems confused about Silanus, claiming that Caligula divorced his daughter Junia at this time, late 37, whereas she had died in 34 or thereabouts. He also claims that Caligula used to call Silanus his 'golden sheep', while this expression was in fact used of a different Marcus Junius Silanus, consul of 46 and proconsul in Asia in 54 (*PIR*²¹ 833; Tac. *Ann.* 13.1.1); see Gelzer 1918b: 390.
 - 24 Suet. *Cal.* 23.3.
 - 25 Tac. *Ag.* 4.1 The fact that Graecinus was still alive in 39/40 is a problem only if Tacitus means that his refusal led immediately to his death. A number of individuals, such as Avillius Flaccus, Prefect of Egypt, were not executed immediately.
 - 26 Grimal 1972 believes that the character of Creon in Seneca's *Oedipus* was inspired by Silanus.

- 27 Suet. *Cal.* 25.1; Dio 59.8.7; Suetonius gives the name as Livia Orestilla, Dio as Cornelia Orestina. Since Suetonius is more likely to have used official records, he is more likely than Dio to have got it right. Also, if she was called Livia, Caligula's joke would have more force. Kajava 1984 cites the evidence for Orestina and Orestilla, both of which are attested. On Piso: *PIR*² C 284 (Scheid 1975: 2 07–09); on Cornelia: *PIR*² C 1492. Piso's precise relationship to the other members of the family is uncertain. He was possibly the son of Lucius Calpurnius Piso 'Augur' (consul 1 BC) or grandson of Lucius Calpurnius Piso 'Pontifex' (cos. 15 BC).
- 28 Suet. *Cal.* 25.1; quip: Flory 1986: 367; Guastella 1992: 180; serious precedents: Wardle 1998: 116. Wardle's case is strengthened by Suetonius' observation that the precedents were cited in a formal document.
- 29 Suet. *Cal.* 24.1; Wardle 1998: 116 notes that she is the only wife who fits properly into the description given by Suetonius.
- 30 Meise 1969: 104 suggests that this could also explain why she was forbidden to cohabit with Calpurnius, who might have shown up Caligula by producing a child.
- 31 Dio 59.9.3; Néraudau 1998: 337–8 notes the ritual aspects of the death of Machaon, with the expiatory sacrifice of the puppy.
- 32 Philo *Flacc.* 13–16, *Leg.* 57–62; Suet. *Cal.* 26.1; Dio 59.10.6.
- 33 Philo *Flacc.* 16; Dio 59.10.6; Willrich 1903: 288 sees the appointment as a demotion. But it need not be so. Seius Strabo, father of Sejanus, held the Prefecture of Egypt after that of the praetorian guard (Dio 57.19.6). Pelletier 1967: 56. n. 1, followed by Schwartz 1990: 191, puts the death shortly after January 31, AD 38.
- 34 Philo *Flacc.* 13–16; *Leg.* 41–58.
- 35 Bauman 1974: 176 suggests that, because the *maiestas* law had been suspended, Caligula may have brought an *accusatio adulterii* against Macro, under the specific category of *lenocinium* (pandering).
- 36 *AE* 1957.250. Philo *Flacc.* 14 is the only source to claim that their children died also, and his testimony is therefore suspect; for modern speculation about the real reasons for Macro's death: De Visscher 1964; Meise 1969: 252; Dabrowski 1972: 129–30 suggests that Macro (as well as Gemellus and Silanus) was put to death through the intrigues of Lepidus and Caligula's sisters.
- 37 Smallwood 436 A.16–18, B. 14–17. There has been much debate about the dating of the trial; some argue that the fragment is to be dated to 41 and that it involves Agrippa I. The arguments for both dates are summarised by Musurillo 1954: 118–23; Smallwood 1976: 253–5 (she tentatively prefers 41).
- 38 As restored by Bell 1932: 5–16. The reading has won general but not universal acceptance. Stein 1935: 1568 hesitantly accepted it; Stein 1950: 28 rejected it. Apart from the strangeness of Isidorus' involvement, Stein 1950 is concerned that Macro would be called *eparchos* (Prefect) many years afterwards, though he never took up the office. Bell 1952: 104 notes that the *Acta* are not verbatim accounts. Musurillo 1954: 19, 21; 1961: 12, 14 accepts the reading.
- 39 Philo *Flacc.* 26; see Balsdon 1934b: 134; Dabrowski 1972: 210.
- 40 Suet. *Cal.* 56.1: *praefectorum praetori*; Dio 59.25.7: *tous hyparchous*. One of the Prefects may have been Marcus Arrecinus Clemens, who is said by Tac. *Hist.* 4.68.2 to have held office under Caligula.
- 41 On this, see Crook 1955.
- 42 Philo *Leg.* 26; Dio 59.5.5, 20.2.
- 43 Vitellius: Suet. *Vit.* 4; 17.2; Asinius: Pliny *NH* 9.67. *PIR*² A 1225 mistakenly states that he bought it from Caligula.
- 44 Dio 59.11.1, 22.6–7; we do not know when the new marriage took place. *PIR*² A 371 places it at the beginning of the reign.
- 45 Suet. *Cal.* 24.1. Mommsen 1887–8: 2.1135.5 accepts the notion of Drusilla being bequeathed the principate.

- 46 See Syme 1986: 179.
- 47 Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.2; Syme 1955: 22 shows that the Lepidus involved in the incident is Marcus not Manius, as often previously assumed.
- 48 Syme 1955: 32–33; *PIR*² A 371; von Rohden 1893: 561–3; Stewart 1953: 74; Hayne 1973: 501; Bergener 1965: 119; Meise 1969: 108. Lipsius 1581, on Tac. *Ann.* 14.2 (followed by Balsdon 1934b: 42; Nony 1986: 359) argued that Lepidus was the son of Julia, granddaughter of Augustus and her husband Aemilius Paullus (and thus the cousin of Caligula and his sisters), mainly on the grounds that the poet Namatianus 1.306 called the affair between Lepidus and Agrippina an *incestum adulterum*. *Incestum*, however, can mean ‘lewd, sinful’, not necessarily ‘incestuous’, and is an appropriate general epithet for adultery, especially since Agrippina was the sister of Lepidus’ late wife.
- 49 Lepidus could also have traced a less direct link with the imperial family, in that his paternal grandmother would have been Cornelia, the daughter of Publius Cornelius Scipio and Scribonia, who was later married to Octavian.
- 50 Faur 1973a: 15 assumes, from his accelerated career, that Lepidus can have been only 22/3 when he was given his advancement. But we cannot be sure that the intended office was the quaestorship.
- 51 *SEG* 30.1251; discussed by Reynolds 1980: 70–84.
- 52 Gelzer 1918b: 409; against this, see Willrich 1903: 466.
- 53 Thus Caligula probably acquired an Aphrodisius, whom he owned before his accession, from his parents’ household (*CIL* 6.2.4119); his daughter Elate became a freedwoman of Julia, daughter of Drusus.
- 54 Sen. *Ep.* 47.9; Jos. *AJ* 19.64–9; Pliny *NH* 36.60; Plut. *Galb.* 9.1.
- 55 *PIR*² C 763. Stat. *Silv.* 3.3; Martial 6.83, 7.40; see Weaver 1965: 145. His son, Claudius Etruscus, attained considerable wealth and was the patron of Martial and Statius.
- 56 Philo *Leg.* 166, 178, 203–206 (an interpolation in the original text, perhaps added by Philo himself).
- 57 Jos. *AJ* 19.204; Suet. *Cal.* 24.1; Dio 59.22.6; Eutropius 7.12.3; Vict. *Caes.* 3.10, *Epit.* 3, 4; Hieron ap Eus. 178 (Helm); *Suda* (Adler 1967: 1.3); Scholiast on Juvenal 4.81; Orosius *ad Pag.* 7.5.9. On the incest: Guastella 1992: 171–3; Ferrill 1991: 82–83 accepts the claims of incest; Alston 2014: 130 suggests that it could have been Caligula himself who spread the stories.
- 58 Tac. *Ann.* 14.2.4.
- 59 Willrich 1903: 292.
- 60 Scholiast on Juvenal 4.81, where he confuses Passienus Crispus with Vibius Crispus, courtier of Domitian (see Jones 1986: 250–1). The passage came originally from Suetonius, *De Oratoribus* (now lost).
- 61 Suet. *Cal.* 24.3.
- 62 *Fasti Ostiensens*: III *Idus Iun. Drusilla excessi[t]* (Smallwood 31.30). Köberlein 1962: 52, n. 14 conjectures that Drusilla died in childbirth.
- 63 Suet. *Cal.* 24.2; Dio 59.11; Herz 1981b.
- 64 Sen. *Polyb.* 17.4; Suet. *Cal.* 20, 24.2; Woods 2012: 443–44 suggests that Caligula was already in Sicily when he heard that Drusilla was dead or dying, and hastened back to Rome, to return to Sicily afterwards.
- 65 Gaius or Lucius Caesar: *CIL* 6.895; Augustus: Tac. *Ann.* 1.16.2, 50.1; Germanicus: Tac. *Ann.* 2.82.4–5; Drusus: Suet. *Tib.* 52.1; Drusilla: Philo, *Flacc.* 56.
- 66 *AEA* 12c.60–88.
- 67 Dio 59.11.2 uses the term *epsephisthe*, which suggests a senatorial decree. A *Lex Valeria Cornelia* of 5 AD regulated the cult honours to be paid to Gaius and Lucius Caesar, and Dio’s language at 56.42.3 and 43.1 suggests that the funeral honours paid to Augustus were also made by a senatorial decree; on the honours: Herz 1988: 14–15.
- 68 Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.1; Dio 58.2.2–3.

- 69 Livia: Suet. *Claud.* 11.2; Claudia: Tac. *Ann.* 15.23.4; Poppaea: Tac. *Ann.* 16.21.2.
- 70 Based on the restoration (by Henzen 1894) of *AEA* 12c.92–99 (Smallwood 5.5–12), where Drusilla is mentioned in some capacity. Temporini 1978: 72 dates the consecration before September 23.
- 71 Suet. *Aug.* 100.4; Dio 56.46.2. Dio gives the name as ‘Geminus’. Sen. *Apoc.* 1.2 says that the individual who saw Drusilla ascend was the *curator* of the Appian Way.
- 72 Cyzicus: *IGR* 4.145 (Smallwood 401.12); Mytilene: *IGR* 4.78b (Smallwood 128b); Magnesia: Kern 1900: 156.
- 73 Suet. *Cal.* 24.2; Dio 60.5.2.
- 74 Taeger 1960: 283, n. 163 says that the word used by Dio, *sekos*, is ambiguous but is generally applied to a temple; on this see Gros 1976: 129. Sen. *Con. Pol.* 17.5 says that he set up *templa* and *pulvinaria* to her.
- 75 Velleius 2.75.3; Dio 59.3.2; Ritter 1972a.
- 76 *CIL* 8.26222. Lambrechts 1953: 227 claims that Panthea was chosen as a common cult name of Isis.
- 77 Diva: Caere: *CIL* XI. 3598; Veleia: *CIL* XI. 1168; Tibur: *ILS* 196 (Smallwood 128a); Caburro: *CIL* V 7345; Bourges: *ILS* 197; Apamea: *RPC* 2012, 2014; Grant 1954: 146; Thea: Priene: Hiller von Gärtringen 1906: no. 228; Epidauros: *IG* IV 1400; Delphi: Jannoray 1936: 382; Mytilene: *SEG* 34.180; Nea Charis (‘New Grace’): Samos: *IGR* IV 1721; Homonoia (‘Concord’): Halsarnae: *IGR* IV 1098; Pythia: Delphi: *AE* 1923.53; Persephone: *RPC* 2472 (Smallwood 222); Gascou 1998 records a remarkable inscription to Drusilla found on a marble slab built into the cathedral in Avignon (*ILS* 195) by a ‘i?berius’, almost certainly ‘Tiberius’ and hence almost certainly the future emperor Claudius. The dedication is made to her as *parens*, which is a striking word to use of one’s niece, although *parens* can support wider, honorific, connotations than those simply of ‘parent’. If this individual is indeed Claudius, the inscription may belong to 40 when he met Caligula in Gaul with a delegation from the senate, although it is difficult to see how it could have ended up in Avignon – the slab is large and heavy; it is unlikely to have migrated far. Gascou argues that it belongs to shortly after the time of Drusilla’s consecration.
- 78 See Boak 1927: 185–6; Scott 1931: 245, 251–2; Rea 1988: 11, 13; the name appears in a register for 39/40 but compiled after mid-40 (P. Mich. Inv. 876 [recto]). Its last known entry seems to be on December 42 (P. Mich. V. 321.19); also on a calendar of Caligula from Oxyrynchus, *POxy* 3780.
- 79 Dio 59.11.3, 13.8; Megalesia: *CIL* I, p. 235; *Inscr. Ital.* XIII 2.435–7; Ovid *Fast.* 4.353–4 reports that the Megalesia was a time of hospitality. It is to be distinguished from the more orgiastic March festival of Cybele; see Fishwick 1966: 193–202.
- 80 *RG* 19; Val.Max. 1.8.11; Ovid *Fast.* 4.347–8. On a cameo in Vienna, Livia, as Cybele, holds a radiate bust of Augustus (Furtwängler 1900: 3.318).
- 81 *ILS* 112 (*EJ* 100); Dio 54.8.5, 26.2, 55.6.6.
- 82 Dio 59.13.8. Dio’s account seems to place it relatively early in the year, but we may not be justified in pressing his chronology too hard on this point (see Humphrey 1979: 128–9).
- 83 Caesar: Dio 43.45.2; Germanicus: Tac. *Ann.* 2.83.2; Britannicus: Suet. *Tit.* 2.
- 84 See Scullard 1974: 124, 254.
- 85 *RIC*² 1. (Tiberius) 56, 62, 68; Suet. *Claud.* 11.2; Philip of Thessalonika records an elephant, pulling the chariot of divine Caesar, in an epigram (*AP* 9.285) ascribed by Cichorius 1922: 344–6, and Weinreich 1928: 78 to Caligula’s time.
- 86 Tiberius: Suet. *Tib.* 26.1; Dio 58.12.8; Drusilla: *AEA* 16; (Smallwood 11); 59.24.7.
- 87 Pliny *NH* 9.117; Suet. *Cal.* 25.2; Dio 59.12.1.
- 88 Her sister, Lollia Saturnina, was reputedly one of Caligula’s sexual conquests: Sen. *Cons.* 2.18.4.

- 89 Tac. *Ann.* 5.11.1, 14.47.1; Dio 58.9.3; Scheid 1975: 213–218; see Vogel-Weidemann 1982b: 340–48, No. 47; Hurley 1993: 104 suggests that Caligula was primarily seeking a close rapport with Memmius, rather than his wife.
- 90 Cato: Plut. *Cat. Min.* 25.5; Tiberius: Vell. Pat. 2.94.1; Brasloff 1932: 633. Oliver 1966: 150–3 argues that Dio’s term (*enguesai*) is in reference to the Athenian procedure of *enguesis*, whereby in order for a woman’s marriage to be valid she had to be pledged by her *kurios* (‘guardian’), which in the case of a married woman would, of course, be the husband; for objections, see Wardle 1998: 119. But elsewhere Dio uses the term loosely for simple marriage (Dio 48.38.3, 48.54.4); on the term see Harrison 1998: 3–9. Flory 1986: 365–71 suggests another Caligulan quip here.
- 91 *AEA* 12c.97 (Smallwood 5.10). Henzen 1894 suggests that he may have been needed in Rome there for a possible co-option on May 24, AD 38, where his name has been restored (Smallwood 3.34); but Memmius’ past services could well have merited him entry into the Arvals under Tiberius much earlier than 38 (Espérandieu 1929: 633; Scheid 1975: 214). Scheid 1989: 33 restored C. Caecina Largus as candidate for May 24 (see *AEA* 12c.34–5).
- 92 Tac. *Ann.* 14.47.1; Syme 1958c: 787; Groag 1931: 626.
- 93 Jos. *AJ* 19.8.10; Dio 59.28.3–4.
- 94 The topos appears elsewhere: Plin. *Ep.* 7.27.14 claims that he would have been brought to trial but for the death of Domitian.
- 95 Philo *Flacc.* 108–115; see Brunt 1961: 209.
- 96 Philo *Flacc.* 125–6; Sijpstein 1964: 94 n. 24 argues that Isidorus and Lampo in accusing Flaccus were not motivated by personal grudges but were trying to divert the blame away from the Alexandrian Greeks and directing it towards Flaccus.

CONSPIRACY

In his *Life of Caligula* Suetonius makes a distinction between the *princeps* and the *monstrum*, between the acts of a reasonable, in some respects even enlightened, ruler, and the vagaries of an erratic and cruel tyrant. The manifestations of these traits are not divided into chronological phases but depicted as anomalously present in one and the same person. Caligula's character undoubtedly was a mixture of good and bad, and had been from the outset, but it is clear that the *perception* of his reign did go through a process of deterioration, and the contrast between the euphoria of its early days and the arbitrary terror of its end is undeniable. The descent into serious mismanagement and impenetrable mistrust was an ongoing process, and trying to identify a *precise* point where it all started to go wrong is in some respects a pointless enterprise. Philo suggests that everything went well down to the time of his illness, and began to unravel after that, and there is surely some truth in that. Dio says that he found himself in serious financial difficulties in his second year. But Josephus arguably has a better grasp of the historical period when he comments that Caligula continued to rule well and moderately for two years.¹ Certainly, things seemed to take a very serious turn for the worse in AD 39. All the evidence points to it being at this time that the relations between emperor and senate, already increasingly tense, degenerated into suspicion and antipathy. But the precise nature of the conflict is far from clear, since this is also the most murky and obscure phase of Caligula's reign. Our main source is Dio, and unfortunately his narrative is particularly confused during this period.

The first recorded event of 39 was a deceptively straightforward one: at the beginning of the year Caligula began his second consulship. It was, in reality, an occasion of great political significance. From the point when Augustus had stepped down from his repeated consulships in 23 BC he held the office on only two subsequent occasions, in 5 BC and 2 BC, when he introduced his grandsons (and adopted sons) Gaius and Lucius to public life. Similarly, after assuming the principate, Tiberius held the office on three occasions only, in AD 18 (with Germanicus), 21 (with Drusus) and 31 (with Sejanus). Caligula had at the beginning of his reign declined the perpetual consulship, and did not resume the office in 38, possibly to make a show of constitutional moderation. Beginning in 39, however,

he held it for each of the last three years of his life. In terms of practical power it signified little, and on each occasion he soon stepped down to allow a suffect to replace him. But as a symbolic gesture it says much more than the literary accounts of extravagant behaviour and bloodthirsty cruelty. It demonstrates that from now on Caligula was quite overt in his determination to assert his personal dominance in the government of the Roman state. The illusion of the princeps as merely an equal partner with the senate has by now been dispelled. This is, of course, different from a demonstration of self-confidence. The adherence to symbols of power might in fact indicate the opposite, a sense of isolation and insecurity and the need to assert oneself through external manifestations of domination.

Caligula's choice of colleague for 39 was an interesting one. Lucius Apronius Caesianus was the son of the Lucius Apronius who, as a legate of Germanicus, had joined the military expedition to avenge Varus, and had later become the legate of Lower Germany. The younger Apronius had qualities that would have appealed to Caligula. He was lively company, and had an outrageous sense of humour. He had made fun of Tiberius during the festival of the Floralia by inviting only bald-headed men to participate, and even the notoriously humourless Tiberius, himself balding, apparently took the joke in good part.² After thirty days Caligula stepped down from office, although he allowed Apronius to complete his full term of six months, indicating that at least a modicum of selective deference to the senators was still being displayed at the very beginning of 39. Caligula was succeeded by Sanquinius Maximus, Prefect of the city (*praefectus urbi*), who had already held a consulship some time before 32. He was the first man in over fifty years (apart from the emperors) to have held the consulship twice. It is not clear why he was singled out for this honour. Since he was Prefect of the city he obviously enjoyed Caligula's favour. Also, he was a friend of Memmius Regulus, the complaisant husband of Caligula's third wife, and this connection must have stood him in good stead.³

The previous year had seen Caligula continuing to deal with what he seems to have perceived as disloyal or suspicious behaviour during his illness, and it had ended with growing mistrust and suspicion, when Flaccus was recalled from Egypt and condemned to exile. In 39, according to Dio, the selective ruthlessness was transformed into a campaign of savage brutality. The despatch of Gemellus and his supporters, and the consecration of Drusilla, would have brought home to the senate the reality that Caligula was not the compliant and malleable youth they had hoped for. Inevitably there would have begun to arise in the minds of many a feeling that Rome would be a happier place if he could somehow be replaced. Most senators would have kept any such desire muted through fear, but a number may now have started to form the beginnings of a small but active senatorial opposition, perhaps, as Winterling has argued, entering into a full-blown conspiracy.⁴ The most serious development came when, at some point in the year, Caligula entered the chamber and delivered a savage denunciation of its members.⁵ The confrontation is surprising for its ferocity, but unfortunately the sources are silent about what specific event might have provoked the outburst. No

doubt, as some have noted, when building up his evidence against Macro and the others, Caligula would have gone back through the records of earlier trials that he pretended to have destroyed, records that would have revealed the complicity of some of the senators.⁶ The difficulty is that such a search would probably have taken place about a year earlier, and can hardly be seen as the immediate cause of the dramatic series of events that unfolded this year. The latter part of 39 would be marked by the conviction of a number of conspirators and it is tempting to think that the speech may have been provoked by the discovery, for the first time, of evidence against the plotters. Winterling may well be right that there was a conspiracy, but if there was, the evidence for it is now lost, which would hardly be surprising, given the secret nature of conspiracies. We have no idea what might have triggered Caligula's decision to re-examine the papers from the trials. Much of the hostile information against individual senators would inevitably have been conveyed to him in secrecy, and it is therefore not remarkable that it should remain concealed from us. All of this, however, is speculation. We can simply record that in 39 the tension between emperor and senate reached a critical stage, resulting in a major confrontation. Adding to the uncertainty, Dio is especially vague about the chronology of that particular year, and it is far from clear when during its course the crucial speech was given.⁷

During his speech, in what must be regarded as the most momentous scene in the senate since the denunciation of Sejanus, Caligula attacked the senate for their hypocrisy in finding fault with Tiberius simply because he, Caligula, had done so; his action did not give them such a right, and, indeed, such behaviour on their part might itself well be construed as *maiestas*. He then took up the case of each of the individuals who had lost their lives during the Sejanian terror. His general theme was that the prosecution in each particular instance had rested not with Tiberius but in fact with the senate. His evidence for this claim, it was revealed, came from the very documents that he was supposed to have destroyed. Most sinister of all was his denunciation of the senators' earlier fickleness in honouring Tiberius, and even Sejanus, since any honour that they might pay to Caligula would be similarly specious and could hide the possibility that they hated him. Dio's chilling account is given some confirmation by Suetonius who says, in a general context, that Caligula called all senators *Seiani clientes* ('clients of Sejanus') and *matris ac fratrum suorum delatores* ('informers against his mother and brothers'), on the basis of documents supposedly destroyed, and justified Tiberius' actions against his family on the grounds that his predecessor could hardly have refused to believe the cumulative testimony of so many accusers.⁸ We cannot be sure how much of this speech as reported is what Caligula said, and how much has been recreated by Dio, but at this stage Dio has Caligula dramatically introduce an imaginary Tiberius, who addressed him and approved his present response. He concluded that he saw no protection for himself in trying to please the senators – the only wise course was to make them fear him. He likely ended this speech with the famous line of the tragic poet Accius, *oderint dum metuant* ('let them hate provided they fear').⁹ The resumption of prosecutions for *maiestas* trials was the most striking indication of how serious a

turn events had taken. Caligula had, of course, been able to protect his position in 37 without the need for charges under this specific heading. But actions in that year were against a very limited number of prominent individuals. From now on the threat of *maiestas* indictments would hang over *all* senators.

The senators remained true to type as 'men ready to be slaves' (in Tiberius' characterisation) when they reassembled the next day, and manifested the depth of their humiliation. At this meeting they proceeded to heap praise on Caligula as a sincere and pious ruler, each individual member doubtless feeling grateful and relieved that he personally had thus far escaped punishment. They voted to offer annual sacrifices to the emperor's clemency in commemoration of his speech, when his golden image was to be carried up to the Capitol and hymns sung in his honour by boys of noble birth.¹⁰ In addition, rites to clemency were to be performed on the anniversary day of the address. *Clementia* was an important concept for the Julio-Claudians. As a virtue it had gained a special Roman connotation in the context of how to treat a vanquished enemy; towards the end of the Republic it was particularly associated with Caesar, and it became an important imperial virtue, as a quality that emanates from a specific individual. The theme was common under Tiberius, appearing on coins with a type of laurel wreath and shield, and in 28 the senate set up an altar to *Clementia*.¹¹ The emphasis on this concept in 39 adds weight to the notion that Caligula had suppressed some sort of conspiracy, and then made a show of not being vindictive towards those who had made their loyalty patent.¹²

Given the general uncertainty that surrounds these events it would be dangerous to try to peer into the collective mind of the senate in 39. Some two years earlier they apparently believed that they had a young ruler who could be manoeuvred into collaborating with them. It seems remarkable that two years later any of them could still have been under this illusion. Perhaps more significantly, Caligula had come to understand the effect of fear on the institution as a whole. The individual senator who became the target of the emperor's displeasure would know that in the end there was little that could protect him. His instinct would be to join the herd, which, having no immediate resources for attack, would be reduced to cringing flattery. Clearly, throughout 39 Caligula sought to assert himself in his dealings with the senate. Dio places the famous incident of the bridge over the Bay of Naples just after the speech, and the spectacle might have been intended as a graphic demonstration of how completely the emperor was now master of events.

In the latter months of 39 Caligula left Rome to undertake a military campaign along the Rhine frontier and a planned invasion of Britain (see [Chapter 8](#)). But before these great enterprises got underway there was a change in his private life. At some point he divorced his wife Lollia, and remarried. The sources are much confused over when this happened. Both Suetonius and Dio claim that his divorce from Lollia followed very quickly after their marriage, which was probably solemnised in September 38.¹³ Now in a separate passage Dio places the divorce just before Caligula's next and final marriage, to Caesonia, but confusingly he places this last among events near the close of 39, after the emperor had departed

for his extended stay in the north. There have been suggestions that the final marriage might have taken place in Gaul, and Caesonia's presence in the province might be suggested by an inscription from Lyons that indicates a female of some prominence (name missing) in Caligula's company at the dedication of a building in that city.¹⁴ His new wife did make public preparations in Rome for the triumph that would greet his return from the north, but she could well have returned to the city when he went on to the German frontier in 39. There are, however, serious objections to the idea of a marriage ceremony in Gaul. Caligula was present in Rome when their daughter was born, supposedly soon after the marriage, and after the birth he took part in a formal dedication ceremony on the Capitol.¹⁵ Immediately after his account of the marriage Dio observes that the weather was so hot that awnings had to be placed over the forum. This seems to suggest that the marriage took place at least as early as the summer.¹⁶ It seems very possible that Dio tacked on the reference to the marriage and the hot summer at the end of the record of the year as an afterthought, rounding off his account of 39 with a summary of a few random details about happenings in Rome during the year, like the oddments that Tacitus will often similarly insert at the end of a year.¹⁷

What, then, of the divorce from Lollia? Dio claims that Caligula got rid of her on the pretext that she was barren, but in reality because he had simply wearied of her. Tacitus recounts that one argument made some years later in favour of Lollia as a prospective wife for Claudius was that she was apparently barren, and would thus not present a threat to the succession.¹⁸ The divorce probably occurred in the spring of 39, perhaps not long after Caesonia had become pregnant. Suetonius claims that Caligula forbade Lollia from having intercourse with another man in perpetuity; such a prohibition, if valid, might have been intended to avoid the risk that she might have children and thus turn the claims of infertility back on Caligula.¹⁹ But Caligula's first wife had been pregnant at the time of her death, and his fourth bore his child just close to the time of their marriage – it seems that he hardly needed to fear gossip about his potency. It should also be recalled that there were reports of a similar prohibition imposed on his second wife, and it is possible that we have a garbled account of some restrictive period he placed on one of the wives before remarriage would be allowed. This restriction was regular Roman practice, to avoid confusion over paternity should the divorced wife turn out to be pregnant.²⁰

Caligula's motive for divorcing Lollia may be quite uncomplicated, that he had got his mistress pregnant, and wanted to marry her. In his next wife, Milonia Caesonia, he seems to have found a true soulmate. She was the daughter of Vistilia, a woman married six times and whose remarkable gestation periods earned her a place in Pliny's *Natural History*.²¹ Presumably one of Vistilia's relatives was the Vistilia known to have registered herself as a public prostitute, probably to avoid a prosecution for adultery. Caesonia was a product of the sixth marriage.²² Nothing is known of her father, who was presumably a Milonius. Suetonius says she was not beautiful, nor young, and had a reputation for high living and low morals. Moreover, she had already produced three daughters (her previous husband



Figure 6.1 Agrippa bronze coin (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

or husbands are unknown). She was probably born about AD 5 and thus was some seven years older than Caligula, a disparity that was unusual among the Roman upper class.²³ Her portrait has been identified on a coin of Herod Agrippa (Figure 6.1). If it is realistic (as are depictions of Caligula on Agrippa's coins) we see a rather severe and authoritative face, on a woman who does, indeed, look somewhat more mature than Caligula.²⁴ Suetonius claims that she was promiscuous, but acknowledges Caligula's devotion (he apparently remained faithful to her) and his great pride in her, so intense that there was a story that he showed her off nude to his friends and paraded her in cloak, helmet and shield to the soldiers.²⁵ Contemporaries could not understand her appeal, hence the stories that she must have ensnared him with a love potion.²⁶ Of course the fact that she had borne three children already, albeit daughters, would have been a positive recommendation, since she was clearly fertile.

Caesonia was far pregnant when Caligula married her, and according to Suetonius the marriage took place on the day of her daughter's birth, after the actual birth (a month before, according to Dio).²⁷ Caligula was devoted to the child, whom he named Julia Drusilla in remembrance of his late sister. She is depicted standing with a small figure of Victory on the reverse of the coin issued by Herod Agrippa, mentioned above, identified by the legend, 'to Drusilla, daughter of Augustus'. On her birth Caligula carried her to the Capitoline Temple, where he placed her on Jupiter's knee (to establish her paternity, according to Dio and Josephus), then on Minerva's, commending the child's education to the goddess. Some modern authorities see in this an imitation of Egyptian or Etruscan practice, but it appears to be within the Roman tradition. Quintus Catulus, for instance, dreamt that he saw a child (Augustus) in the lap of Jupiter Capitolinus and was told by the god not to remove him, as he was being reared to be the saviour of his

country.²⁸ Caligula may well have spoiled her, as she seems to have developed a savage temper, even on one occasion viciously scratching the eyes of her playmates, which her father humorously cited as absolute proof of his paternity.²⁹

The tensions between Caligula and the senate seem to have come close to breaking point by September. Just after the third day of that month Caligula removed the two consuls from office. They, of course, would be the suffecti, who would probably have taken office on July 1. He gave two reasons. One was that they had failed to order a thanksgiving for his birthday. The usual races and annual shows had been held, as in previous years, but they were apparently not on a scale that would be worthy of him. The other reason is more remarkable: that they had celebrated the traditional festival for the victory at Actium. Caligula insisted that he would no longer allow the celebratory games for the victories at Actium and Sicily, held on September 2 and 3, because they had been disasters for the Roman world (since they were victories in a civil war, there was a certain logic to the claim).³⁰ His public explanation was almost certainly hypocritical (see [Chapter 14](#)), but he went ahead and dismissed them in any case, breaking their *fascēs*, or symbols of office. One of them took the whole affair so much to heart that he killed himself, and his excessive reaction suggests that Caligula might well have suspected them of some far more serious misdemeanour, possibly on good grounds in the case of at least one of them. The latter part of 39 was marked by plots and treachery, and the involvement of one or both of the consuls in some sort of disloyal activity cannot be ruled out.³¹

In Dio's account of the incident the two suffect consuls for 39 are not named. But in a different context he indicates that Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo was consul in this year; the only place available for him would be as one of the dismissed suffecti.³² The name Corbulo is familiar as that of one of the great generals of the Neronian age, the man who waged a highly successful campaign against the Parthians, and it is generally assumed that Corbulo the consul of 39 is the father of the famous general.³³ What qualifications would he have had? We know that he was the fifth husband of Vistilia, mother of Caligula's wife Caesonia, and this family link might have helped. Tacitus tells us, under AD 21, that Corbulo, as senator of praetorian rank, quarrelled in the senate about his precedence, and also (not necessarily in the same year) that he complained about the roads and was subsequently appointed road commissioner. Dio adds that Caligula used him to prosecute other corrupt road commissioners and that this service earned him a consulship.³⁴ This sequence, however, would make the gap between Corbulo the father's praetorship (before AD 21) and consulship (AD 39) an unduly long one, and he could hardly still have been youthful even in 21. Moreover, in his list of the children of Vistilia, Pliny emphasises that Corbulo (the general) had consular rank, as if to distinguish him from his father.³⁵ It is thus possible that the surviving consul of 39 was the famous Corbulo, and not his father, and that Dio has confused the father and the son. But there can be no certainty on the issue.

Suetonius observes that after the double dismissal the state was without consuls for only three days, and Dio provides the information that one of the suffecti was

Gnaeus Domitius Afer, appointed *euthus* (immediately).³⁶ Domitius Afer's rise to the consulship was an extraordinary episode, and, as reported (our main source is Dio), is an object lesson in the art of survival. He was noted as one of Rome's greatest speakers, and his urbane witticisms became so famous that they were collected together and published in a work mentioned by Quintilian.³⁷ Under Sejanus he had been willing to act against Caligula's family and had conducted the charges against Agrippina's friend Claudia Pulchra (charged with treason and adultery) and her son Quinctilius Varus (see [Chapter 2](#)). Caligula supposedly bore him a grudge for this disloyalty. At some point in 39 he was himself charged on the grounds that he had set up a statue of Caligula and placed on it an inscription that the emperor had already reached his second consulship in his twenty-seventh year.³⁸ It would have been meant as a compliment, part of the normal honorific titulation in any Roman inscription, but Caligula apparently thought otherwise, viewing it as a sarcastic comment on his extreme youth. Proud of his own oratorical skills Caligula personally conducted the case. Afer's tactic was supposedly not to try to respond, but to express astonishment at the quality of his opponent's oratory. He made no defence, and merely repeated the accusation point by point, praising it throughout the process.³⁹ Finally, he hurled himself to the ground in supplication, declaring his fear of Caligula as a speaker rather than as emperor. The latter then dropped the prosecution, pressed by the freedman Callistus, whose favour Afer enjoyed. When asked why he had launched the prosecution in the first place Caligula is supposed to have answered that it would not have been right to keep his fine speech all to himself.

Clearly, the story cannot be taken at simple face value. Afer was raised to the consulship at a precarious moment in Caligula's reign, when the emperor was planning to leave Rome and would need someone he could trust completely to preside over the senate and keep a general eye on things in his absence. If Caligula was willing to reverse his earlier stand and promote Afer it was clearly because he thought he could be of use. Moreover Afer's service must have been extremely valuable. It is perhaps no accident that his period of office saw the exposure of conspiracies against Caligula both in the provinces and within the imperial house. Afer, along with the powerful Callistus, may have played a key role in bringing to light plots against Caligula. Certainly a store of political secrets that could bring its possessor power and influence would have carried more weight than a display of oratorical ingenuity.

Afer's colleague as suffect, Aulus Didius Gallus, is attested in *tabulae cereatae* (wax tables where the impression of the writing survives on the wood surface) from Pompeii, where he is seen to have been in office by at least September 15.⁴⁰ Didius had already been marked for favour in the second half of 38, the previous year, when he apparently replaced Marcus Porcius Cato as Curator Aquarum, head of the three-man board originally appointed by Augustus to supervise the water supply. He remained in office until 49.⁴¹ This position ought to have been reserved for consulars, but since Didius did not receive his consulship until 39 he must still, in 38, have been of praetorian rank. The appointment of a non-consular

to the position suggests that he was an ambitious and able administrator with special talents.⁴² He was a solid career man, a loyal and industrious servant of the kind typified by Memmius Regulus. If Afer's consulship was a reward for some kind of political collaboration, Didius' was earned by hard work and competence, and it may have been his steadfast reliability that Caligula sought in late 39.⁴³ Domitius Afer adopted a rather patronising view of his industrious and ambitious colleague. Quintilian reports that on one occasion Didius overtly campaigned for a province to govern after his consulship, and when he acquired it, made a show of grumbling, as though the responsibility had been forced on him. 'Do it for the good of the nation!' was Afer's ironic quip.⁴⁴

It is evident that in 39 Caligula felt himself threatened from several quarters. Dio reports that the construction of the bridge over the Bay of Naples (see [Chapter 11](#)) proved so costly that he was forced to concoct a number of bogus charges against various individuals as a way of raising funds. Many died in prison, Dio claims, and some were hurled from the Tarpeian rock, or committed suicide. The suggested financial motivation is not altogether convincing, since in a different passage, but clearly referring to the same incidents, Dio says that it was through their friendship with the emperor's enemies that many, including aediles and praetors, were being forced to resign their offices and stand trial.⁴⁵ It is in fact clear that there was serious, if ill-defined opposition, to Caligula at this time, and equally clear that his response was ruthless, suggesting that any financial benefits that the deaths might have brought must simply have been added bonuses. Unfortunately very few victims are identified by name. Dio mentions a Titius Rufus, otherwise unknown, who was charged with denigrating the senate by claiming that it thought one way and voted another (this can hardly have come as a shock, one would have thought). He committed suicide. In view of the actual charge, it may be that his case was instigated by some of the more obsequious senators, rather than by Caligula himself. The praetor Junius Priscus was also accused, on unspecified charges, the real target supposedly being his wealth. On learning after Junius' suicide that he was in fact of modest means, Caligula apparently quipped that he had suffered a pointless death.⁴⁶ It is also to this year that Dio assigns the banishment of Carrinas Secundus, in the context of the emperor's envy and suspicion of everyone. The fate of Carrinas illustrates the dramatic change of attitude that had occurred since the beginning of the reign towards censorship and freedom of publication, since his apparent sin was to deliver a speech against tyrants as a rhetorical exercise. It seems that he opted for Athens as his place of exile and committed suicide there later. Dio describes Carrinas as an orator, but his choice of Athens might suggest a philosophical bent, and his fate could mark the first beginnings of a stormy period in the relations between the emperor and philosophers, of which there is more evidence in the following year.⁴⁷

A number of changes in military commands are known to have occurred in this year, generally interpreted as a reflection of insecurity on Caligula's part about the loyalty of his provincial legates. Philo claims that he was very afraid of those governors who had large armies at their disposal, and it is probably to this general

period that we should assign the reorganisation of the province of Africa, when control of its one legion was removed from the hands of the senatorial governor to a commander appointed by the emperor (Chapter 7).⁴⁸ Some of the changes, however, may well have been routine in nature, without political overtones. Lucius Volusius Saturninus is identified in inscriptions as governor of Dalmatia under Tiberius from at least 29. He was replaced about 40, but clearly not in disgrace. He was already seventy-three in AD 39, and on his return to Rome he was appointed Prefect of the city (*praefectus urbi*). He is described by Tacitus as a friend (*amicus*) of all the *principes* under whom he served, and he is in fact a good example of a Tiberian career man who continued to do well under Caligula. His replacement is also interesting. Lucius Arruntius Camillus Scribonianus (consul 32) was the adopted son of the same Lucius Arruntius who was accused of *maiestas* under Tiberius and who chose to commit suicide rather than live under Caligula (see Chapter 2). Scribonianus seems to have served Caligula loyally, but later raised a rebellion under Claudius and died in Dalmatia in 42.⁴⁹

Ummidius Quadratus was governor of Lusitania at the time of Caligula's accession and we see him administering the oath of allegiance there to the new emperor early in 37. This particular governorship regularly offered a speedy progression to the consulship, which Quadratus seems to have held, as suffect, in 40.⁵⁰ Thus, while Quadratus may well have been recalled in 39/40, his tenure of the consulship soon after indicates that there was no question of disgrace or mistrust. Also the governor of nearby Hispania Citerior (identity unknown) was apparently replaced in 39/40. Gaius Appius Junius Silanus, consul of 28, seems to have been sent out to replace him at this time; he is at any rate present at the Arval rites for the beginning of 39, when he is magister, but there is no mention of him after that, when he may have been in his province.⁵¹ Interestingly enough, Appius is another one of those who were accused of *maiestas* under Tiberius in AD 32, presumably as a Sejanian, but who did not seem to suffer under Caligula.

It was almost certainly in 39 that Lucius Vitellius was replaced by Publius Petronius as legate of Syria.⁵² Syria was a highly important command, its complement of four legions matched in size only by that of each of the two Germanies. According to Dio's account, Vitellius had performed well but his achievements made Caligula suspicious. The legate supposedly escaped with his life only as a result of his low cunning, by performing *proskynesis* before the emperor and worshipping him as a god, deftly excusing his inability to see the moon in Caligula's presence by the brainwave of commenting that only a god could see another god. So charmed was Caligula that Vitellius not only survived but prospered. This is surely another example of the concocted narrow escape, to enable Vitellius to explain afterwards why he seemed to be so favoured by Caligula. Certainly he later had a reputation for sycophancy, and was considered a model of *adulatorium dedecus* ('flattering disgrace'). His son, Aulus, the future emperor, was a close friend of Caligula, and it is more than likely that Vitellius' recall was simply a routine one. His successor Publius Petronius was a man of unquestioned ability, well suited to the position, with close ties in fact to

Vitellius, since he was married to the daughter of a Vitellia, and his own daughter was married to Aulus, the son.⁵³

At least two of the command changes, however, do seem far from routine, and may reflect a conscious effort by Caligula to disarm his perceived opponents. The first of these involved Calvisius Sabinus, appointed governor of Pannonia some time after late 36.⁵⁴ When Sabinus returned to Rome in the summer of 39 he was indicted, along with his wife Cornelia. Sabinus was no stranger to trouble. He was one of the group of five, including Annius Vinicianus, accused of *maiestas* in 32 after the fall of Sejanus. He and Appius Silanus had been freed through the intercession of Celsus, a tribune of the urban cohort. Sabinus emerged apparently unscathed from this affair in 32; he was not to be so fortunate in 39.⁵⁵ The charge laid by Caligula against him is not made explicit, but Dio does provide some details about the misdeeds of his wife Cornelia. It was alleged that she had ‘gone the rounds’ of the sentries and ‘watched the soldiers in manoeuvres’. The former charge is expanded by Tacitus, who says that she went to visit the camp dressed as a soldier, whether in disguise or as a transvestite is not made clear, and had sex with the guards, being caught with Titus Vinius ‘in the headquarters’ (*in principis*).⁵⁶ Tacitus reports that Vinius was charged with adultery and imprisoned, but was later released (probably after the death of Caligula) and went on to command a legion, and to be a close friend of the future emperor Galba (they were both murdered). It is possible that Cornelia was charged with the same crime as her husband, and that the claim of sexual misconduct is merely the traditional cover for political wrong-doings. The allusion to the ‘headquarters’ is especially suggestive and it is possible that her presence at the manoeuvres of the soldiers, not indictable in itself and with a precedent in the behaviour of Agrippina and Plancina, could hint at an attempt somehow to suborn the Pannonian legions. But certainty is impossible.⁵⁷ In any case, the charges were serious enough for Sabinus and his wife both to commit suicide. Sabinus seems to have been succeeded in Pannonia by Aulus Plautius, who would later win acclaim as Claudius’ commander in the invasion of Britain in AD 43.⁵⁸

There is a link between Sabinus and another figure, someone who looms large in the events of 39, in that thirteen years earlier, in 26, he had been a colleague in the consulship with Cornelius Lentulus Gaetulicus. This is a tenuous enough connection, but it is possible also that Sabinus’ wife Cornelia may have been the sister of Gaetulicus, Cornelia Gaetulica.⁵⁹ Gaetulicus, legate of Upper Germany, was the son of Cossus Cornelius, the consul of 1 BC. The father was so fond of drink that he would fall asleep in the senate and could not be roused, so would have to be carried home. But like Ulysses S. Grant, he found a liberal alcohol consumption quite compatible with an outstanding military talent. He won a major victory over the Gaetulians in Africa in AD 6 and was allowed to add the element ‘Gaetulicus’ to the family name. He passed the honorific on to his son, described by Velleius as an *adulescens in omnium virtutum exempla genitus* (‘a youth born for every type of excellence’).⁶⁰ In common with other members of the Roman nobility the son combined a political and military career with literary activities,

becoming a poet of some standing, mentioned as such by Pliny and cited by Martial as a precedent (along with Catullus) to justify risqué language.⁶¹ He held the praetorship in 23, and was consul with Sabinus in 26.⁶² In 29 he became legate of Upper Germany.⁶³ His position there would have been a powerful one. In the first place, there are good grounds for believing that he succeeded his brother Cossus Cornelius Lentulus. The four legions of Upper Germany would thus have owed their loyalty to two successive commanders from the same family. Moreover, his father-in-law, Lucius Apronius, was legate of Lower Germany from 24, and Tacitus suggests strongly that Gaetulicus' influence extended also to the four legions under Apronius' command.⁶⁴ Clearly Gaetulicus' direct or indirect control of eight legions, nearly one third of the whole legionary army, would have weighed heavily with Tiberius in his sensitive dealings with the legate after the fall of Sejanus. Accused in AD 34 because he had betrothed his daughter to Sejanus' son, Gaetulicus managed to escape conviction. Tacitus reports a story that he wrote to Tiberius from Germany pointing out that his connections with Sejanus had been fostered at Tiberius' urging, and that his own error of judgement was no different from Tiberius'. His loyalty to the emperor, he asserted, remained unshaken, and just as Tiberius had retained the principate, so he should retain his province. Tacitus admits that this anecdote seems unbelievable, but he is inclined to give it credit because Gaetulicus was the only person to survive among those closely associated with Sejanus.⁶⁵

Gaetulicus had thus previously shown, after the fall of Sejanus, a canny understanding that he owed the continuation of his military command in no small part to political considerations. He would presumably have spared no effort to ingratiate himself with Caligula. The device he used in his case was flattery, and somewhere in his writings he sought to curry favour with the young emperor by inventing the fancy that Caligula was born in Tibur, implying that the city, sacred to Heracles, would reflect some of its glory on to him (see [Chapter 2](#)). The comparison between Caligula and Heracles, a mythical hero who journeyed afar and smote down powerful enemies, best suits the context of AD 39, when Caligula was planning to campaign against the Germans and Britons. Given that Gaetulicus, as commander of Upper Germany, would expect to take part in these events, it would have been appropriate for him to glorify the projected expedition in a poem.⁶⁶ A fragment of this work may have survived in the commentary by the late first century grammarian, Probus, on the *Georgics* of Vergil. On *Georgic* 1.229 *haud obscura cadens mittet tibi signa Bootes* ('by his setting Bootes will send you clear signs'), Probus cites Gaetulicus, *cum ait de Britannis* ('when he says of the Britons'):

*Non aries illum verno ferit aere cornu,
Cnosia nec geminos praecidunt cornua, tantum
Sicca Lycaonius resupinat plastra Bootes.*

(In the spring air the ram does not strike him with his horn,
Nor do Cretan horns cut off the twins;
Lycaonian Bootes is content to tip up carts that are dry.)⁶⁷

These lines convey very well the scope of Caligula's ambitions in 39. The images describe the phenomenon of circumpolarity, whereby the further north a traveller in the northern hemisphere moves, the greater will be the number of stars that rotate around the pole above the horizon without setting (the converse is true of the southern hemisphere). The topos of the remoteness of Britain is an old one in Latin literature, and the motif of circumpolarity in an exaggerated northern latitude is a highly poetic way of expressing it, effective in a poem dedicated to a ruler planning to set off to conquer this isolated northern region.

It could hardly be said that the affairs of Upper or Lower Germany had been well managed before Caligula's reign by either commander, and Rome had suffered a number of military setbacks in both districts, mainly, it seems, through a general lack of discipline (see [Chapter 8](#)). Gaetulicus seemed to be more interested in currying favour with his troops than in keeping them in fighting trim.⁶⁸ Given his record of incompetence, it would not have been remarkable for him to be relieved of his command. But the circumstances of his removal constitute another of the great mysteries of Caligula's reign. We know that in 39 the emperor departed for the north in some haste to participate in military campaigns against Britain and Germany. Just before October 27 news reached Rome that Gaetulicus had been executed (see below). We cannot say how long after Caligula's departure the execution took place, since we do not know precisely when Caligula set out, but it must have been after he had dismissed the consuls and the new consuls had taken office, early in September. Both Dio and Suetonius suggest that Caligula took his leave suddenly and that the formal departure was not in fact from Rome itself. Dio claims that it was from a 'suburb' (*proasteion*), while according to Suetonius he went first to Mevania (modern Bevagna) on the bank of the river Clitumnus, a beauty spot about 60 miles north-east of Rome on the Via Flaminia.⁶⁹ Mevania was located only a few miles from a famous oracle, which supposedly advised Caligula to add to his German bodyguard and prompted him to leave for Germany. Suetonius adds that from there he journeyed north hastily (*festinanter et rapide*), and that it may have been to improve his speed that the inhabitants of towns on his route were required to sweep the streets for him and to sprinkle them to settle the dust. He did not, however, skimp on personal comfort, and rested on the route on a litter carried by eight bearers.⁷⁰ Why he should have chosen to leave in this fashion remains a mystery. The speed and place of departure might indicate that he wanted to keep his plans secret from Gaetulicus until the last possible moment. But it is difficult, in practical terms, to see what difference this would make. Once Gaetulicus had learned of Caligula's arrival, whether sooner or later, he would hardly have been likely to expose himself to unnecessary danger. In any case the organisation of the imperial train for an absence that would last over six months would have required extensive preparations, even if Dio's account of the lavish arrangements is exaggerated.

On his journey north, Caligula was supposedly accompanied by actors, gladiators and women. He also took with him at least part of the praetorian guard, who, because of the need for haste, transported their standards on pack animals.

Their presence need not, however, imply extraordinary security, as Claudius also would have praetorians with him in Britain, and two praetorian cohorts even fought alongside Germanicus during his campaigns in Germany.⁷¹ The only specific individual who can be identified as having travelled the whole journey with Caligula is the freedman Claudius Etruscus (see [Chapter 5](#)). The assumed presence of Passienus Crispus on the northern journey is based on no more than the information that he attended Caligula on foot when the latter was ‘making a journey’, *iter facientem*.⁷² On the possibility that Caligula was accompanied by his sisters and his brother-in-law, Aemilius Lepidus, more will be said below.

The precise sequence of events in late 39 is unclear, but we do know that by October 27 a supposed conspiracy of Gaetulicus had been exposed and suppressed, and recorded in the Arval record of that day *A.d VI K. Novembr./ ... ob detecta nefaria consilia/ in C. Germani]cum Cn. Lentuli Gaet[ulici* (‘on October 27... because of the wicked plots of Gnaeus Lentulus Gaetulicus against Gaius Germanicus’).⁷³ This Arval entry is clear enough, yet we have no explicit information on how and why Gaetulicus fell foul of Caligula, or who betrayed him to the emperor. We have a tauntingly brief item of information on this in Dio. In his narrative of the events of 39/40 he briefly dismisses the emperor’s military achievements in the north, and notes that while he did little damage to the enemy, he inflicted great harm on citizens and allies, putting some to death on the grounds that they were ‘rebelling’, and others because they were ‘plotting’ (*neoterizontas... epibouleuontas*), but the real reason being that they were rich. Unfortunately Dio says that he will spare the reader and not list specific victims, except those historically significant. The very first person he mentions is no less than Gaetulicus, and the reason he alleges for his death is his popularity with the soldiers. Suetonius, in the seven consecutive chapters that he devotes to the northern campaign, makes no reference whatsoever to Gaetulicus, and in the whole *Life of Caligula* mentions him only as the author of flattering verses. In the section of the *Life of Galba* dealing with that future emperor’s career in Germany, Suetonius limits himself to noting that Gaetulicus was Galba’s easy-going predecessor in the German command.⁷⁴

Any conclusion reached about Gaetulicus’ death must inevitably be highly tentative.⁷⁵ Clearly, he had been executed before October 27, AD 39, when the exposure of the conspiracy was recorded in Rome. It is also generally assumed that the execution took place in the presence of Caligula, in Mainz, Gaetulicus’ headquarters, although a meeting between Gaetulicus and Caligula, if indeed there was a meeting at all, could equally well have taken place, in, say, Lyons.⁷⁶ What is especially puzzling is that it can hardly be expected that Gaetulicus would have exposed himself to risk if he had any suspicion of what Caligula was up to, and conversely it is inconceivable that Caligula would have risked the danger of placing himself in the enemy camp. In fact, the only indication we have that Caligula might have been in Germany when the execution took place is that he is not recorded as present at the Arval ceremonies at the end of October. But, in fact, this indicates only that he was not in Rome. We do know that he spent some time in Mevania, and it seems more than likely that agents (including Galba?)

were despatched to Germany to eliminate Gaetulicus before the emperor's arrival. Caligula, then, may well have remained in the relative security of Mevania, protected by the praetorians, until the deed was carried out. Once word arrived that it had been done, he could send a report to Rome, for it to be recorded by the Arvals, then depart at once for Germany. This is, of course, speculative, but it is to be emphasised that there is no evidence that Caligula was present in Germany (or Gaul) when Gaetulicus died, and that the traditional view is in itself also speculative.

Perhaps even more puzzling than the 'mechanism' of Gaetulicus' elimination is the reason behind it. Of course Gaetulicus was a legate who would have made any ruler feel uneasy. He had direct control over four legions on the Rhine, indirect influence over another four, and would presumably have had some authority over the two new legions, XV and XXII Primigeniae, that were currently being raised in connection with the planned invasion of Britain (see [Chapter 8](#)). He had shown himself to be a general who constantly ingratiated himself with his own troops and who, on past form, would probably resist any attempt to dismiss him. Dio insists that he was killed because of his popularity, and this may in a sense have been true, if misleading. In view of the coming campaigns against the Germans and Britain he could not be left in his command. If it was felt that he was likely to resist dismissal, as he had done before, the safest course would have been to eliminate him, and to pretend to the world afterwards that he had been involved in some sort of dark plot. The claim of rebellion, as Dio suggests, may just have been a pretext.⁷⁷

Many scholars have seen in Gaetulicus' downfall more than the mere dismissal of an incompetent commander. It is argued that because of his earlier associations with Sejanus he would have felt himself endangered, and that he was part of a much larger threatened group of old adherents of Tiberius and others unhappy with Caligula's conduct. He has even been seen as an adherent of the putative old pro-Gemellus party.⁷⁸ But there is no indication that former adherents of Sejanus were in fact suffering during this period. After all, Lucius Apronius had been made consul for the first half of 39. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Gaetulicus had contact with any larger political grouping. Indeed there is no evidence for any of his activities or contacts outside Germany in the previous ten years. Nor is there anything to substantiate the notion that old Tiberians were suffering. Figures like Memmius and Sanquinius certainly seem to have been enjoying unimpeded careers.

Lucius Apronius, who was the father of the consul of 39, and the father-in-law of Gaetulicus, and had been appointed legate of Lower Germany from in the twenties, is not linked to the events of 39. He would have been quite elderly by then (he was consul in AD 8) and may already have retired or died. Some have sought to find a connection with the execution of Sabinus, Gaetulicus' partner in the consulship in 26. The possible combination of Sabinus' two Pannonian legions and those under Gaetulicus' direct or indirect charge could have put potential conspirators in control of a massive body of legionary troops. But there is no firm

evidence of any close link between the two men – a family relationship is far from proved, and based on little more than wife and sister sharing the common *nomen* of Cornelia. Of course, even if Gaetulicus had no formal connections with Sabinus, the fate of the latter might well have caused him to feel some alarm over what might be in store for other provincial legates, and might have driven him to some desperate plot. Certainly it is to be expected that it would put him on his guard, making it even less likely that Caligula would have wanted to risk going to Germany while Gaetulicus was still alive.⁷⁹

The most intriguing association between Gaetulicus and some kind of organised conspiracy takes us right to the heart of the imperial family, and to a man very close to Caligula: Marcus Lepidus. In his list of those victims whose historical significance justifies their being identified by name, Dio places Gaetulicus first. Then, without specifying any connection between the two, he names none other than Lepidus, Caligula's old friend, and husband of the late Drusilla. Dio provides no explicit reason for Lepidus' downfall, but hints that an illicit affair with Caligula's two sisters may have played a part. Finally, he notes that to celebrate Lepidus' death Caligula sent three daggers to the Temple of Mars Ultor in Rome. Suetonius' account may go back ultimately to the same source as Dio's. In the context of Caligula's supposed relations with his sisters, but not in the chapters dealing with the northern campaign, Suetonius mentions the *causa* ('case') of Lepidus. During this *causa* the emperor made public certain letters of his sisters, involved in plots against their brother. Suetonius also refers to the dedication of the three daggers. Lepidus was executed, and Seneca provides the detail that his throat was cut by a tribune named Dexter. In a bizarre travesty of the return of Germanicus' remains to Rome, Caligula's sister Agrippina was given Lepidus' bones in an urn and forced to carry them back to the city. On their arrival in Rome the remains were not placed in the traditional columbarium, but rather the senate decreed that they be cast out unburied, on the motion of the future emperor Vespasian. Both sisters were then deported to the Pontian Islands, traditional places of exile off the west coast of Italy. Suetonius claims that in the winter of 39/40 Caligula sold their furniture, and constantly terrified them with threatening messages, such as the grimly humorous quip that as well as islands he also had swords, giving rise to a later tradition that he had planned to execute them, and that they were saved only by his assassination.⁸⁰

Again, even the circumstances surrounding Lepidus' death elude us. Modern studies generally make the assumption that he and the sisters travelled to Gaul/Germany with Caligula. None of the ancient sources explicitly states this, and the inference is drawn from a number of passages. Dio records that Caligula accused Lepidus and his sisters in a communication to the senate; this implies that there was no formal trial in the house, merely a statement from the emperor of the grounds on which he had acted, and that any proceedings were conducted *in camera*. This is almost certainly the *causa Lepidi* to which Suetonius refers, and the publication of the letters between the sisters and their lover presumably took place shortly after their hearings. This admittedly does not prove, but it does suggest

very strongly, that the condemnation of Lepidus and the sisters took place when Caligula was outside Rome. Suetonius tells us that Caligula afterwards auctioned off the belongings of the sisters, including slaves and freedmen. Since the sale took place in Gaul it is presumed that these were the bits and pieces that the sisters had taken along with them. The humiliation imposed on Agrippina of carrying Lepidus' remains back to Rome shows that he died somewhere outside the city. Finally, as will be seen, Claudius and others were sent out from Rome to congratulate Caligula on the suppression of the conspiracy, indicating that this must have post-dated the emperor's departure from the city.⁸¹

While all of the above makes clear that the disgrace and death of Lepidus occurred outside the city, it does not mean that they necessarily happened either in Gaul or in Germany. The auction of the sisters' property in Gaul proves nothing. Caligula found the Gallic provincials so keen to acquire items that had an imperial connection that he commandeered carriages and animals and transported all the goods from the old imperial residence on the Palatine. This supposedly caused such a strain on the transportation system that it resulted in a shortage of carts for transporting bread! Thus he in fact imported items for the second auction to Gaul from Rome *after* his arrival in the province, and could likewise have earlier imported the jewels, furniture and slaves of his disgraced sisters. Also, it must be remembered that Caligula did not depart for the north immediately from Rome but from Mevania, some 100 miles north of the city. Mevania does in fact seem much better suited for the execution of Lepidus than Gaul/Germany. It is a much more practical starting point for the dramatic procession of Agrippina with the bones of Lepidus – the great distance from Lyons or Mainz would surely have made such a *coup de théâtre* impractical. Also, it is hard to see why Caligula would have thought fit to take a party of suspects on a journey of over 600 miles, with all the attendant problems of security. That Lepidus was put to death by a tribune in no way proves that he was in a legionary camp, since the executioner Dexter could well have been a tribune not of a legion of the Rhine army but of the praetorian guard, a detachment of which accompanied Caligula to Germany, and would presumably have been in Mevania beforehand.⁸²

As in the case of Gaetulicus, the actual mechanism of Lepidus' execution is in fact less puzzling than the motives behind it.⁸³ The despatch of the three daggers to the temple suggests that he believed that he had survived a very serious attempt on his life. The charges of adultery laid against the two sisters may well have been the traditional device of covering up political intrigue behind the veil of sexual indiscretion, but Dio's observation that people in Rome were brought to trial simply on the basis of their friendship towards the sisters implies some sort of conspiracy. Certainly Nero repeated the gesture of the daggers when he put down the famous Pisonian conspiracy of 65 and dedicated the dagger of Scaevinus, one of the participants, in the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitol.⁸⁴ It has been argued that Lepidus became involved in an intrigue beyond his own immediate personal ambitions, and that he was the leader of an evolving opposition to Caligula, made up of the old adherents of Tiberius, and probably including at least one of the

consuls removed in 39.⁸⁵ But there is, in fact, no hint in any of the sources of such a broader role for him, beyond Josephus' observation that he was friendly with Lucius Annius Vinicianus, the 'noblest of the Romans'. This man would play a conspicuous role in the final conspiracy and in its immediate aftermath. Together with his father Annius Pollio, as well as Appius Silanus, Mamercus Scaurus and Sabinus Calvisius, he was among those accused of *maiestas* in 32, probably because of suspected ties with Sejanus. Moreover, according to Josephus, he believed that his old friendship with Lepidus was a source of danger to himself. But Caligula clearly did not see him as a threat. On May 24, AD 38, Vinicianus was co-opted into the Arval brotherhood and seems to have held a consulship sometime before Caligula's death.⁸⁶ He was the first member of the brotherhood known to have been co-opted through the instruction of the emperor rather than the vote of the college, and of the men named to the body from 37 on by Caligula he is the only one who does not belong to a patrician family and is not from one of the traditional 'Arval' families. This, if anything, suggests special favour.⁸⁷ His involvement in the later plot against Caligula was supposedly motivated by his desire to avenge Lepidus. But if Josephus' testimony is to be taken at face value, Vinicianus had not been involved in the opposition prior to Lepidus' death, and it was only as a *consequence* of what happened to the latter that Vinicianus was moved to act. Indeed, the whole story of the friendship with Lepidus and the desire to avenge him may have been a later fabrication to enhance Vinicianus' image after the assassination.

The husbands of Caligula's two living sisters do not seem to have been tarnished by suspicion of involvement in any plot, and they seem curiously to be left in the background. Domitius, husband of Agrippina, at any rate was still in Rome in late October, since his presence is attested at the meeting of the Arval brothers a day or two before the key October 27 ceremony.⁸⁸ There is no mention in any of the sources of the whereabouts of Livilla's husband, Vinicius.⁸⁹ There is thus no evidence to indicate that Lepidus' actions were connected with any broader movement against Caligula, and they are more easily explained by his own immediate and personal ambitions. If Lepidus and the sisters plotted to overthrow Caligula they must have thought it would serve their own best interests. Caligula's marriage to Caesonia might have provided the stimulus to action.⁹⁰ The earlier death of Drusilla would have marked a set-back to Lepidus' own dynastic ambitions, but he seems at the outset to have remained on close terms with Caligula, to judge from the fact that he delivered the eulogy at her funeral. Moreover, on the return of Flaccus from Egypt in the autumn of 38, Lepidus was influential enough, according to Philo, to see to it that Flaccus was exiled and not executed, and, again through Lepidus, Flaccus was able to exchange the bleak Gyaros for the more hospitable Andros. Lepidus could no doubt have continued to entertain hope for some sort of role for himself in the future.

Caligula's earlier illness might have left the impression that his health was not strong, and up to about the middle of 39 he had not produced a surviving child. There would hardly have been any immediate and serious contenders for

the succession from within the imperial family at that time. Claudius, who had probably the best claim in terms of family connections, was never considered a viable candidate, and apart from him there were only marginal possibilities.⁹¹ But though Lepidus might have felt that his own prospects were reasonably promising, the absence of a direct link with the imperial family would have been a major obstacle. This he may have sought to overcome through a connection with one (or both) of the surviving sisters. This was the reputation he acquired; the early fifth century poet Namatianus (1.303) says of him: ‘while he desired to insinuate himself into the realm of the Caesars, he paid the penalty for foul adultery’ (*Caesareo dum vult irrepere regno/incesti poenam solvit adulterii*). Of the two sisters, it is likely that the excessively ambitious Agrippina played the more dominant role; certainly Tacitus later speaks of her committing adultery with Lepidus *spe dominationis* (‘in the hope of power’).⁹² Agrippina’s son Nero, the future emperor, was born in 37 and she no doubt felt that with Drusilla’s death his prospects had been strengthened. Her husband Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, who had been more of a political liability than an asset, was probably seriously ill by 39, since he died of dropsy in 40. A marriage with Lepidus after her husband’s death would strengthen Agrippina’s position, and hence her son’s. It would not have been out of character with her later conduct if she had begun to scheme for Nero’s accession from the very outset. At any rate, soon after his birth in December 37 she had asked her brother to give the child a name, probably hoping that he would give his own, as a sign that he saw Nero as a possible successor. Caligula reputedly suggested she give him Claudius’ name, either because of its family associations, and thus as a mark of distinction, or from some perverse sense of humour (he is said to have looked at his uncle when he said it). Whether or not Agrippina was in fact offended, and whether it was in reality an insult, we shall never know, but in any case she did not take up the suggestion.⁹³

Agrippina’s ambitions would have had to be all-consuming. She and her sister enjoyed enormous privileges under Caligula and presumably only the prospect of becoming the new Livia would have been sufficiently enticing to persuade her to take up against him. Livilla’s possible motivation is not so clear. Lepidus could have married only one of the sisters, and unless he was engaged in a complex love triangle that kept each sister in the dark about the other’s involvement (hardly likely) it would have meant that one of the sisters, probably Livilla, would have had to act in the full knowledge that she was to be left on the sidelines. There must surely be something wrong with the account as it has come down to us. Nor does it seem likely that Livilla’s involvement could have been through her husband, Vinicius, who, as noted earlier, is not mentioned by the sources and, more significantly, emerges unscathed from the whole conspiracy.⁹⁴

Caligula’s marriage to Caesonia, whose mother Vistilia had been a marvel of fecundity, and who herself had, with the birth of Drusilla, borne four children, would have dealt a serious blow to any ambitions of both Lepidus and Agrippina. If this marriage is placed in early/middle 39 it provides a reasonable chronological setting for the break between Lepidus and Caligula. There may also have been

some estrangement between the two friends at this time because of Avillius Flaccus. The former Prefect of Egypt had been given a comfortable place of exile in Andros, on Lepidus' intervention. According to Philo, Caligula came to regret this decision and eventually decided to eliminate him. He may have been acting on new evidence, but it is also possible that in the general paranoia of 39 Caligula was removing those whose past behaviour rendered them at all suspect. Lepidus would have realised that further intervention would only bring risk on himself, without necessarily helping Flaccus. He finally gave up the effort. Agents were despatched to Andros. Flaccus observed their arrival and tried to hide in the wilder interior of the island. They pursued him there and eventually tracked him down, stabbing and clubbing him to death, and depositing his remains in a crude pit.⁹⁵ If Philo is right in placing Flaccus' death before that of Lepidus, the order to execute Flaccus would mark an important change in Lepidus' fortunes and in his relationship with Caligula, and may have been what finally drove him to plot against his former old friend. Of course it is also possible that Philo's sequence is wrong, and Lepidus died first, and that after his fall action was taken against his old associates, including Flaccus (although nothing, apparently, happened to Vinicianus).

The death of Flaccus seems in fact to be part of a pattern. As the threat of conspiracy grew, so Caligula grew increasingly intolerant of those previously suspected of disloyalty. Philo claims that Flaccus headed a list of men who had, in the emperor's estimation, escaped death for a life of comfortable exile. The list may also have included Antei-us, father of a senator by the same name who died during the final plot against Caligula. According to Josephus the elder Antei-us had originally been exiled, and then, like Flaccus, killed by a gang of soldiers sent out to deal with him (the charges are not stated). He is otherwise unknown.⁹⁶

By far the most intriguing aspect of the 'Lepidus conspiracy' is a single reference in Suetonius' *Life of Claudius*. We are told that Claudius was sent to Germany as part of the embassy despatched to congratulate the emperor on the exposure of what Suetonius calls the *Lepidi et Gaetulici coniuratio* ('the conspiracy of Lepidus and Gaetulicus').⁹⁷ This is the only information in any of the sources that suggests any kind of collaboration between these two men, and there has been much speculation about what form their cooperation might have taken. No plot could possibly hope to succeed without military backing, and Lepidus, it might be argued, would have sought out a leader who could provide it. The German legions offered the most promising power base.⁹⁸ For his part, Gaetulicus might have felt himself threatened on two grounds. He had a reputation as a lax disciplinarian. Moreover, his old links with Sejanus might have seemed especially dangerous in the light of Caligula's fiery speech in the senate in early 39. The fate of Flaccus would also have shown that there was little prospect of clemency towards old opponents. If Gaetulicus was to look for protection it might well have seemed to him that Agrippina and Lepidus formed the nucleus of the group that was best situated to provide it.⁹⁹ But there are also good reasons to doubt that Lepidus and Gaetulicus could have acted together in a concerted and organised fashion. Dio makes no suggestion

that there was any formal link between them, although he does see both men as victims of the same general purge. More significantly, Suetonius says nothing of any joint action in the *Life of Caligula*, and refers specifically to the case of Lepidus alone. Perhaps most significant of all is the omission of any reference to Lepidus from the celebrations that followed the suppression of the conspiracy, noted in the Arval record for October 27. The entry is, admittedly, fragmentary, but there are simply not enough letter spaces to accommodate Lepidus' name. This can hardly be explained by a desire to downplay publicity about Lepidus' role, given that Caligula wrote to the senate denouncing him. It may well be that in alluding to the conspiracy of Lepidus and Gaetulicus in the *Life of Claudius*, Suetonius (or his source) telescoped two generally contemporaneous but essentially discrete episodes under a broad heading; his concern in this part of the *Life*, after all, was to explain basically why Claudius travelled north when he did, rather than to give a detailed account of events in Caligula's career.

Other prominent figures also suffered at this time. The execution of the client ruler of Mauretania, Ptolemy, has been linked by some with the downfall of Gaetulicus (see [Chapter 7](#)). Among the last events of 39 recorded by Dio is the fate of Tigellinus Ophonius, familiar as the evil praetorian Prefect of the reign of Nero. Suspected of an affair with Agrippina, he was banished. We are told by a scholiast on Juvenal that Tigellinus came from a poor family in Agrigentum but went on to become an associate of Marcus Vinicius and Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, husbands of Livilla and Agrippina. How much reliance we can place on this testimony is uncertain, nor is it clear what light it would throw on any possible role for him in any conspiracy.¹⁰⁰

Another man who attracted Caligula's wrath, in very obscure circumstances, was the supremely hypocritical orator and philosopher Seneca. Dio claims that his only sin was to plead a case eloquently while the emperor was present. He was condemned to death but spared, according to Dio, when Caligula learned through some 'female associate' that he was in an advanced state of consumption and would die before too long anyway. It is possible that Seneca was involved on the fringe of the opposition to Caligula, in which case Seneca's eloquent speech may have been in defence of a suspected conspirator. His later conduct certainly suggests that he was very close to the people who fell from grace. In 41 he was banished by Claudius for an affair with Livilla, who was herself exiled, for a second time, to the island of Pandateria. Also, he was later suspected of having an affair with Agrippina. It has even been suggested that she might have been his mysterious female associate, although there seems to be no good reason why her name would have been concealed.¹⁰¹ But the story of Seneca's escape seems basically implausible, and very much in the tradition of the eleventh-hour reprieve so familiar in the careers of those who served Caligula. It could very well have been concocted by him to explain how he managed to survive a tyrant he professed to abominate. Certainly, Seneca showed a great talent for accommodating his principles to the outlook of successive rulers, abusing later those he had previously sought to flatter. In what is probably his earliest extant work, the *Consolatio ad*

Marciam, written under Caligula, we find no hint of any criticism of the reigning emperor, but a violent denunciation of Sejanus, in contrast to Seneca's vitriolic abuse of Caligula in his later works (after that emperor's death, of course) and a corresponding absence of strong feeling about Sejanus.¹⁰² All in all, it would have been quite out of character for Seneca to have exposed himself voluntarily to danger. If he had received the slightest hint of Caligula's displeasure this probably would have sufficed to bring him quickly into line and to persuade him to abandon his dangerous friends.

A much more cogent case can be made for the involvement of a younger friend of Seneca. Lucilius Junior was born in humble circumstances in Campania, possibly in Naples or Pompeii. Through his own personal efforts and hard work he rose to equestrian rank and became a successful man of letters, celebrated for his elegant style. He was also a philosopher, the recipient of a number of Seneca's works, notably the *Epistulae Morales*. In the *Quaestiones Naturales*, which Seneca dedicated to Lucilius sometime after 62, he praises the courage that Lucilius showed in adversity, and suggests that he was tortured, or threatened with torture, by Caligula, but that the emperor 'did not tear away his loyalty in the matter of his friendship with Gaetulicus' (*non... in amicitia Gaetulici Caius fidem eripuit*). This is an intriguing piece of evidence that must surely, given the circumstances of the composition, be based on the truth. It provides further proof that Caligula suspected that Gaetulicus was involved in a plot and that it involved collaborators outside Germany. What role might Lucilius have played in such a conspiracy? In an ambiguous passage of the *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca speaks of Lucilius' holding at one time a procuratorship in the Alpes Penninae and Graiae, the great mountainous buffer area between Gaul and Italy.¹⁰³ This would have given him a very strategic role in guarding the passes of the Little and Great Bernard had Gaetulicus been considering any kind of military movement against Rome.¹⁰⁴ If, as Seneca suggests, Lucilius was a personal friend of Gaetulicus, he would become a natural object of suspicion, even if, in fact, innocent.

By his prompt action Caligula seems to have succeeded in suppressing an embryonic conspiracy, whose precise character and scope elude us. His activities were conducted against a background of major events outside Italy, especially in North Africa and Northern Europe. It is to these that we must now turn.

Notes

- 1 Phil. *Leg.* 13; Jos *Aḡ* 18.256, cf. Dio 59.2.6, 3.1.
- 2 Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.1, 4.73.1; Dio 58.19.1–2.
- 3 Tac. *Ann.* 6.4.4; Suet. *Cal.* 17.1; Dio 59.13.1–2. Tacitus reports that Sanquinius came to the defence of Regulus in the senate (see Colin 1954: 405–9).
- 4 Winterling 2011: 90–107.
- 5 Dio 59.16.1–7. Dio 59.13.3 implausibly speaks of a major rift with the ordinary populace, supposedly over lack of enthusiasm for the *spectacula*.
- 6 Charlesworth 1934b: 657; Balsdon 1934b: 48–9; Stewart 1953: 77. Humphrey 1976: on 59.16.3 suggests that he found new material in AD 39.

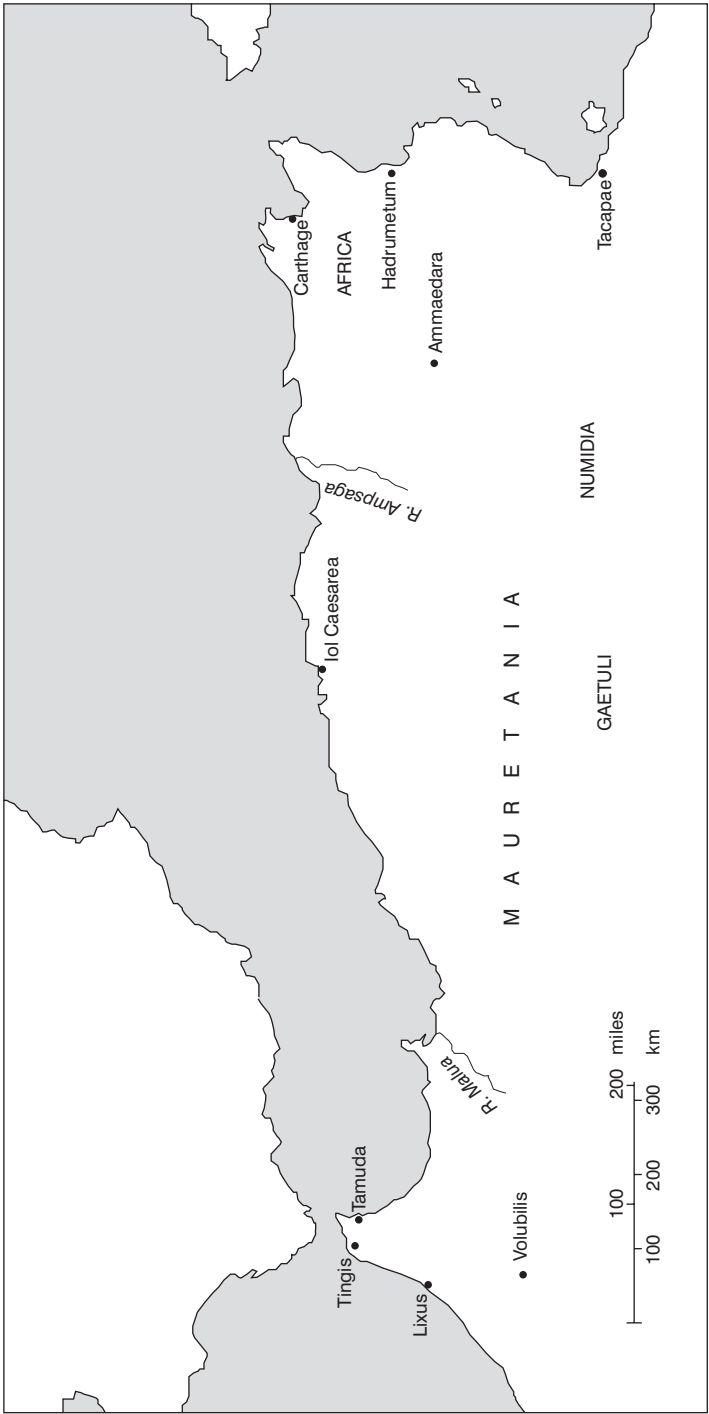
- 7 Faur 1978: 446 suggests the speech immediately preceded Caligula's departure for Germany. He notes that after it the emperor hurried to the *proasteion* ('suburb') (Dio 5 9.16.8) and is similarly reported to have gone to *proasteion ti* ('one of the suburbs') before setting out for Germany (Dio 59.21.2). The difficulty is that the two events are separated in Dio's narrative, and the historian makes no attempt to connect them.
- 8 Suet. *Cal.* 30.2; Dio 59.4.3, 16.3; Balsdon 1934b: 50.
- 9 Suet. *Cal.* 30.1 observes that he was fond of the line, and claims (*Tib.* 59.2) that Tiberius was given to using the variant *oderint dum probent*. Grimal 1979 thinks that the speech was the inspiration for a speech of Oedipus in Seneca's *Oedipus*, where the same idea is expressed (lines 703–4).
- 10 Dio 59.16.9–10. Dio calls the image an *eikon*, presumably in the tradition of the republican *imagines*, not a statue (*agalma*), which would be worshipped. Bauman 1974: 209 suggests that the restoration of the *maiestas* charges would have required senatorial approval. But this would only have been true if the law of *maiestas* had been rescinded; a decision not to proceed with *maiestas* charges would not have needed such approval. Tiberius' comment: Tac. *Ann.* 3.65.3.
- 11 Caesar: Plut. *Caes.* 57.4–6; App. *BC* 2.106; Dio 44.6.4; Crawford 1955: 480.21; Tiberius: *RIC*² 1.23; Tac. *Ann.* 4.74.2.
- 12 Dio 59.16.11 states that the senate granted him an ovation, which may be a confusion with the ovation offered by the senatorial deputation sent north to Caligula in Gaul later in the year (Dio 59.23.2).
- 13 Suet. *Cal.* 25.2; Dio 59.12.1.
- 14 Dio 59.23.7; Wardle 1998: 124–5 argues that Dio's testimony that the marriage occurred at the end of 39 is compatible with other evidence; Hülsen at *CIL* VI. 32347 places it later than October 39. Carcopino 1943: 195 n. 4 suggests that they were married in Lyons. Gelzer 1918b: 404; Garzetti 1974: 99; and Nony 1986: 338 believe the same. On the inscription, see [Chapter 8](#).
- 15 Persius 6.47; Jos. *AJ* 19.11; Suet. *Cal.* 25.4; Dio 59.28.7. Josephus says that when the child was born he took her to the Capitol; Dio says that he did so after giving her the name Drusilla, both of which passages reasonably suggest that the dedication occurred soon after the birth. Suetonius calls her an *infans* at the time of the dedication, technically not a newborn, but given that she was killed in January 41 the presence of the word in Suetonius' narrative is otiose unless applied to her just after her birth.
- 16 Balsdon 1934b: 48; Meise 1969: 119; Phillips 1970: 371.
- 17 See Gray 1948: 121. Humphrey 1976: 235 suggests that sections 23.7–9 somehow had been dislocated from an earlier part of the narrative (possibly after 20.5) and misplaced.
- 18 Tac. *Ann.* 12.2.2; Dio 59.23.7.
- 19 Suet. *Cal.* 25.2; Meise 1969: 104. Eitrem 1932: 22 explains the prohibition on the grounds of personal divinity, that the wife of a god is taboo for other men.
- 20 Wardle 1998: 121–2 notes also the political consideration of the potential threat posed by someone married to the former wife of the emperor, and with access to her considerable wealth.
- 21 Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.1–4; Pliny *NH* 7.39; Suet. *Cal.* 25.3–4, 33; Dio 59.23.7, 28.7; the gestations of Visitilia were examined by Syme 1970, and the topic has been further pursued by Eck 1974; Vervaet 2000; Bruun 2010; Kavanagh 2010a.
- 22 Four of Caesonia's half-brothers from her mother's previous marriages reached consular rank: Quintus Pomponius Secundus, suffect in 41; Publius Pomponius Secundus (who had enjoyed the benefits of Caligula's amnesty in 37), suffect in 44 (from the second); Publius Suillius Rufus possibly suffect in 45 (from the fourth); and Cn. Domitius Corbulo, possibly suffect 39 (from the fifth); listed in Syme 1970: 31; see also Cichorius 1922: II n. 67, 429–32.

- 23 See Syme 1970: 31; 1986: 175. According to Tac. *Ann.* 13.19.2 Agrippina Minor tried to prevent the marriage of Junia Silana with a young nobleman on the grounds that she was *vergentem annis* ('getting on'). It is interesting that Nero was similarly at least six years younger than Poppaea Sabina.
- 24 *RPC* 4977; see Burnett 1987: nos. 3, 5 and 6; Fuchs 1990 identifies the head on a famous cameo in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, Nr. 277), usually taken to be Agrippina the Younger, as Caesonia; Fuchs 1997 has also identified Caesonia (in the company of Caligula) on a sardonix in Boston (BMFA 98.754).
- 25 Suet. *Cal.* 25.3; Suetonius might have depicted a single event as if it were a general occurrence, as he often does; Wood 2000: 216 suggests that it relates to Caesonia dressed as Minerva, or more likely Dea Roma, accompanying the special dedication of Drusilla by Caligula (*Cal.* 25.4); Woods 2014b relates it to the celebrations at the bridge over the Bay of Naples. He suggests (p. 35) that Suetonius' source used *nuda* of Caesonia in the sense of not bearing weapons, rather than of 'naked'.
- 26 Jos. *AJ* 19.193; Suet. *Cal.* 50.2; Juv. 6.615–7, 624.
- 27 Suet. *Cal.* 25.3; Dio 59.28.7; Suetonius' version as it stands is suspect because of the legal problems it would raise over the status of the child; also, there is a textual crux at this point in his manuscript; Guastella 1992: 183 emends the text to remove the discrepancy with Dio; see Wardle 1998: 123–4.
- 28 Jos. *AJ* 19.11; Suet. *Aug.* 94.8, *Cal.* 25.4; Dio 59.28.7. *ILS* 197 (Bourges) records a dedication to Minerva and Drusilla (sister) for the *Salus* of Caligula and the Roman people. See L'Orange 1941: 105–16; and Köberlein 1962: 58–61 for the supposed Egyptian connection; Bonfante 1990 sees it as a manifestation of Caligula's interest in things Etruscan (see also Holleman 1990).
- 29 Suet. *Cal.* 25.4. Eitrem 1932 (10): 55 sees this as proof of Caligula's belief in heredity (this is unconvincing, and no proof of such a belief is needed).
- 30 Suet. *Cal.* 23.1, 26.3; Dio 59.20.1. The Victory games (see *Fasti Amiterni* [*EJ* 51]) are to be distinguished from the Actian games, celebrated near Actium itself every four years (Strabo 7.7.6; Jos. *BJ* 1.398; Suet. *Aug.* 18.2; Dio 51.1.2). Dio himself confuses them at 53.1.4–5.
- 31 A view widely held; Balsdon 1934b: 72; Bergener 1965: 121; Faur 1973a: 25.
- 32 Dio 59.15.5: *tole men hupateusen*. On this question, see Townend 1961: 235 (before the subsequent epigraphic evidence); Humphrey and Swan 1983; Tortoriello 2004: 622.
- 33 *PIR*² D 141; Stein 1903: no. 49; Colin 1954: 409–10.
- 34 Tac. *Ann.* 3.31.3; Pliny *NH* 7.39; Dio 59.15.3–5.
- 35 Syme 1970: 30; Townend 1961.
- 36 Suet. *Cal.* 26.3; Dio 59.20.1. Dio 59.20.3 mistakenly says that Afer was appointed as colleague to Caligula, unless his text is corrupt (emended by Townend 1961: 235).
- 37 Quintilian 6.3.42.
- 38 Dio 59.19.1–7.
- 39 McDermott 1980: 19–23 suggests that a witticism of Afer is preserved in Saint Jerome, *Letter* 52.7: *Scitum illud est oratoris Domitii: 'ego te', inquit, 'habeam ut principem, cum tu me non habeas ut senatorem.'* ('I would consider you as a princeps, even though you might not consider me a senator.') But there is no certainty that the orator in question is Domitius Afer.
- 40 *AE* 1973.138; Gallivan 1979: 67; Tortoriello 2004: 622, says from September 3.
- 41 Front. *De Aq.* 102.
- 42 Rodgers 1982: 174–5; 2004: 277–8 argues plausibly that there was a gap in Frontinus' text between Cato and Didius and that Didius was not appointed curator until the mid-40s. Certainly the text is corrupt at this point.
- 43 The *ad hoc* arrangement of his election in 39 speaks against the suggestion of Vidman 1973: 16–19, that Didius was already consul designate in late 38.

- 44 Quintilian 6.3.68. Didius would go on to become legate of Britain; for a good summary of his career, see Birley 1981: 44–9.
- 45 Dio 59.18.1–4, 23.8.
- 46 Dio 59.18.5; *PIR*² I 801, T 201.
- 47 Dio 59.20.6; Juvenal 7.203–6; *PIR*² C 449; Charlesworth 1934b: 664. The Carrinas Secundus sent to scour Greece and Asia for masterpieces for Nero may well have been his son (Tac. *Ann.* 15.45.3; *PIR*² C 450).
- 48 Philo *Leg.* 259.
- 49 *CIL* III. 8472, 9864a; Pliny *NH* 7.62; Tac. *Ann.* 13.30.4; Suet. *Claud.* 13.2; Dio 60.15.2; see Wilkes 1969: App. II, 442–3.
- 50 Gallivan 1979: 69. n. 19; Tortoriello 2004: 624. Quadratus' predecessor, Fulcinus Trio, attested in Lusitania in January AD 31 (*AE* 1953.88), assumed the consulship on July 1 of that year.
- 51 *PIR*² I 822; cf. McAlindon 1956: 117; Bergener 1965: 149; Alföldi 1969: 15, 193 tentatively puts Silanus in Spain in 40.
- 52 On the date, see Smallwood 1970: 116. John Malalas. 10.244 says that in the third year of Caligula's reign the governor of Syria was 'Pronios'.
- 53 Tac. *Ann.* 3.49.2, 6.32.5–7; Suet. *Vit.* 2.5; Dio 59.27.4–6.
- 54 Dobo 1968: 26; Nagy 1981: 344–5.
- 55 Tac. *Ann.* 6.9.5–6; Dio 59.18.4; his difficulties in 39 are not mentioned by Suetonius.
- 56 Tac. *Hist.* 1.48.2–3; Plut. *Galb.* 12.1.
- 57 Simpson 1980: 358 suggests that the crime may have been limited to lowering the morale of the Pannonian legions and allowing discipline to grow lax.
- 58 See Dobo 1968: n. 50, 26–7.
- 59 *PIR*² C 1391, 1479; Stewart 1953: 72; Garzetti 1974: 91.
- 60 Sen. *Ep.* 83.15; Velleius 2.116.2; cf Dio 55.28.4, Florus 2.40.
- 61 Pliny *Ep.* 5.3.5; Martial *Praef.* See also Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carm.* 9.259; *Ep.* 2.10. Nine epigrams appear in the Greek anthology under the authorship of a Gaetulicus, but their attribution to Lentulus Gaetulicus is far from certain; see Malcovati 1923: 32; Page 1981.
- 62 Praetor: *CIL* I² p. 71; Consul: *EJ* p. 42; Tac. *Ann.* 4.46.1. As consul designate in the previous year Gaetulicus was noted for pressing for lesser penalties in the conviction of Aquila for adultery with Varius Ligus (Tac. *Ann.* 4.42.3).
- 63 The date is provided by Dio 59.22.5, who reports that by 39 Gaetulicus had held the legateship for ten years. Thus he must have been appointed in 29 or 30; Stein 1900: 1385 argues for 29, *PIR*² C 1390 for 30, as does Sealey 1961: 102. In any case he had held the command long enough by 39 to have won the affection of his troops (Tac. *Ann.* 6.30.3).
- 64 *PIR*² C 1381, 1390; Tac. *Ann.* 6.30.3.
- 65 Tac. *Ann.* 6.30; Dio 58.19.1 reports that Tiberius ignored an insult to himself from Lucius Apronius Caesianus, a friend of Sejanus and son of Lucius Apronius, commander of lower Germany.
- 66 Suet. *Cal.* 8.2. Jahn 1893: cxlii, n. 1 believes that the poem dealt with a projected campaign of Germanicus.
- 67 Housman 1935: 167–8; Courtney (2003): 345–6; most editors emend *tantum* ('only') of l. 2 to read *Tauri* ('of the bull').
- 68 Tac. *Ann.* 4.72, 6.30; Suet. *Tib.* 41, *Galb.* 6.3.
- 69 Pliny *Ep.* 8.8.
- 70 Suet. *Cal.* 43; Dio 59.21.2–3; Willrich 1903: 307.
- 71 Suet. *Cal.* 43. Germanicus: Tac. *Ann.* 2.16.5; Claudius: *CIL* XI. 395.
- 72 Schol. on Juv. IV. 14: see Simpson 1980: 360; Syme 1986: 180.
- 73 *AEA* 13fgh. 17–19 (Smallwood 9.18–20). Elsewhere Gaetulicus' name might have been erased from the record, as on an inscription from Vindonissa (*CIL* 13.11513); see Lieb 1958: 70–2.

- 74 Suet. *Cal.* 8.2, *Galb.* 6.2; Dio 59.21.4, 22.5.
- 75 Pagan 2004: 95–97 provides a useful summary of events and current thoughts.
- 76 As suggested by Faur 1973a: 32–5, developing the idea of Teuber 1909: 1–15, 82–6; Suet. *Cal.* 44.1 does refer to Caligula reaching the *castra*, which best suits a military establishment. But Caligula's arrival at that unspecified location is in connection with the imposition of military discipline. Suetonius does not link it with the execution of Gaetulicus; as Hurley 1993: 161 comments, 'all transitional sentences in this portion of the text are vague'.
- 77 Stein 1900: 1385, no. 220; Simpson 1980: 362; see also Willrich 1903: 307; Linnert 1908: 81; Bergener 1965: 120.
- 78 Stewart 1953; Bergener 1965: 119; Meise 1969: 114–15; Faur 1973a: 19.
- 79 Bergener 1965: 121. Faur 1973a: 23 speculates that the investigation into Sabinus and Cornelia might have revealed Gaetulicus' participation in a plot.
- 80 Sen. *Ep.* 4.7; Suet. *Cal.* 24.3, 29.2, Dio 59.22.6–8; Orosius 7.5.9; Suet. *Vesp.* 2.3 reports that Vespasian moved that the conspirators be cast out unburied; Vespasian may have suffered for his gesture later, when Agrippina moved back into a position of influence and was able to block his career; see Jones 1984.
- 81 Suet. *Cal.* 24.3, 39.1, *Claud.* 9.1; Dio 59.22.8.
- 82 Against this, see Willrich 1903: 307; Gelzer 1918b: 402.
- 83 Simpson 1980: 352–3 suggests that Lepidus' crime may have been limited to his affair with the two sisters; see also Auguet 1984: 166; Guastella 1992: 176–80; Lindsay 1993: 110–11; Hurley 1993: 101; Wardle 1994: 228–30.
- 84 Dio 59.23.8; Nero: Tac. *Ann.* 15.74.2.
- 85 Bergener 1965: 120.
- 86 Jos. *AJ* 19.20, 49, 52. *PIR*² A 677, 701; von Rohden 1894b; Hanslik 1961; Bergener 1965: 133; Scheid 1975: 198–203. He was probably the son of Gaius Annius Pollio (cos. 21 or 22) and possibly Vinicia, the daughter of Lucius Vinicius (consul of 2 AD), which would make Vinicianus the nephew of Livilla's husband Marcus Vinicius. Since Vinicianus was a candidate for the principate in 41 it seems a fair assumption that he must have held the consulship before that date (Tortoriello 2004: 623 places it in July–August, AD 40); yet it is difficult to see why he should have been described as especially noble, since the Annii had no republican consul in the family (Schneider 1942: 166). Borghesi 1862–97: 4.477–88 suggests that Annius Pollio married a sister of Marcus Vinicius (cos. AD 30); Scheid 1975: 198 n. 4 says that she was the daughter of Marcus Vinicius (cos. 19 BC), and he may have derived the agnomen Vinicianus from her rather than by adoption (see Doer 1937: 96, 100–7).
- 87 The other Arval appointments are: Marcus Furius Camillus, Appius Iunius Silanus, Gaius Calpurnius Piso and Gaius Caecina Largus (if Sheid 2008: 33 is correct about his co-option in May 38).
- 88 *AEI* 13fgh.7 (Smallwood 10.15–18). Unfortunately the list of members at the October 27 session is lost, but Domitius' absence from Rome on June 1, AD 40, as indicated by the Arval record of that date, is taken by Griffin 1984: 27 to indicate that he left the city with his son on receiving news of his wife's disgrace. Domitius died towards the end of the year in Pyrgi of dropsy (see Geer 1931: 59–61). The sequence of events in Suet. *Nero* 6.3, suggesting that Agrippina was banished *after* the death of her husband, seems to be in error.
- 89 Vogel-Weidemann 1982b: 306 tentatively suggested that Vinicius was proconsul of Asia, 39–40 (but see 289–91).
- 90 Willrich 1903: 297; Linnert 1908: 81; Meise 1969: 101–22; Faur 1973a: 16.
- 91 Apart from Claudius the possible claimants for the succession would have been: Rubellius Plautus, son of Julia (daughter of Drusus) and Rubellius Blandus, or the three sons of Aemilia Lepida (great-granddaughter of Augustus) and Marcus Silanus

- Torquatus, Marcus Junius Silanus, Decimus Iunius Silanus Torquatus and Lucius Junius Silanus.
- 92 Tac. *Ann.* 14.2.4.
- 93 Suet. *Nero* 6.2. See Willrich 1903: 291; Balsdon 1934b: 42; presumably Caligula is supposed to have suggested Claudius' praenomen 'Tiberius'.
- 94 Bergener 1965: 122. Stewart 1953: 76 suggests that Livilla's involvement was through Vinicius.
- 95 Philo *Flacc.* 185–91.
- 96 Jos. *AJ* 19.125 (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.6.1); Orosius 7.5.9; *PIR*² A 727, 8; von Rohden 1984b. An Anteius was among those given the task by Germanicus of constructing a fleet in AD 16.
- 97 Suet. *Claud.* 9.1.
- 98 Willrich 1903: 308; Linnert 1908: 61–82; Meise 1969: 110–11, 119; Faur 1973a: 19; Dettenhofer 2002: 660–1.
- 99 Winterling 2011: 110 suggests that Gaetulicus may in the end have betrayed the others in an attempt to save himself.
- 100 Dio 59.23.9; scholiast on Juv. *Sat.* 1.55.
- 101 Tac. *Ann.* 14.63.2; Suet. *Claud.* 29.1; Dio 59.19.7–8, 60.8.5, 61.12.1; Marchesi 1934: 11 n. 18; Lana 1955: 106–10, 115. Clarke 1965: 62–9, argues that Dio's source may have been friendly to Seneca (e.g. Fabius Rusticus) and that Agrippina was not mentioned because of her later feud with him; challenged by Griffin 1992: 55.
- 102 Sen. *Ad Marc.* 22.4–5, *Ep.* 55.3, *QN* 1.1.3. The *Ad Marciam* is not earlier than the republication of Cremutius Cordus' works. Abel 1958: 610; 1967: 159 argues for a date before Seneca's exile in 41, and suggests 37. Albertini 1932: 14–5 and Griffin 1992: 397 argue for a date after 39 on the basis of complimentary references to Tiberius. Manning 1981 concludes that 40 is the most likely date.
- 103 Sen. *QN* 4. *Praef.* 15; *Ep.* 31.9.
- 104 Hirschfeld 1905: 436 n. 3; Kroll 1927: 1645; Stein 1932: 19, n. 95; Pflaum 1960: 70–73, III 761–2; Faur 1973a: 36–7; *CIL* XII p. xiii; Walser 1974: 174, n. 42. *PIR*² L388 argues that the relevant passage of Seneca is a rhetorical exaggeration, and does not prove an Alpine procuratorship for Lucilius.



Map 2 North Africa

NORTH AFRICA

The term 'Africa' is a frustratingly ambiguous one when used of the ancient Roman world. During the late Republic two Roman provinces were located west of Egypt in the north of the African continent. Cyrenaica (administered together with Crete) comprised what is today the eastern part of modern Libya, while the original Roman province of Africa (Africa Vetus) lay in modern Tunisia. Since its conquest in the second century BC, the province of Africa had attracted a steady stream of immigrants from Italy, with the founding of colonies and the establishment of a prosperous merchant class. To the west it was bordered by the kingdom of Numidia, the last of whose rulers, Juba I, was a man of considerable ambition, with designs on the province. These came to nothing, and Juba was forced to commit suicide in 46 BC, after Julius Caesar's victory at Thapsus. Caesar created a new province, Africa Nova, from Juba's kingdom, and some time before 27 the two Africas were combined by Augustus into a single province.¹

Under Augustus, with some changes of boundary, the united province of Africa Proconsularis became a prosperous, but anomalous, part of the empire. Its agricultural wealth gave it great economic importance, but it was at the same time a region under constant military threat. Economic development created a relentless push further and further south, displacing the nomadic tribes from their traditional grazing lands and creating a constant potential for conflict.

Much of the investment in Africa had been by rich members of the senatorial class – in fact by Nero's day half of the province was reputedly owned by six landowners.² Augustus thus had to balance senatorial interests with military necessity, and in his settlement Africa was assigned a special status. As a public province it was governed by a proconsul chosen from the senate. But it was also protected by a legion (III Augusta), stationed at Ammaedara, under the command of the proconsul, rather than the usual legate appointed by the emperor. Although applied on a limited scale elsewhere (Macedonia, for instance), only in Africa did this peculiar arrangement survive Augustus.

West of Africa lay Mauretania, covering the western half of the Atlantic range (roughly modern Morocco and Algeria), some 800 miles in length, between the Ampsaga River (modern Rhumel) and the Atlantic coast, with an ill-defined

southern boundary. On the death of its last king, Bocchus, in 33 BC, his kingdom came under the de facto control of Rome (its precise status is far from clear). Roman influence was spread by the establishment under Augustus of no fewer than twelve colonies, and in 25 BC the territory was transformed into a client kingdom, ruled by Juba's son, Juba II, although the colonies remained outside his jurisdiction. To compensate Juba II for the loss of ancestral territory in Numidia Augustus seems to have granted him territory of the Gaetulians, the tribes to the south of Numidia, described by Sallust as savage nomads, living on milk and raw flesh.³

Juba II had been taken to Rome by Caesar as a child and brought up in Augustus' household. A highly educated and sophisticated ruler, he saw himself as a monarch from the Hellenistic mould. He married Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, and together they established a Hellenised court, with fine architecture and a library, at their capital of Iol-Caesarea (modern Cherchel). Juba's son, Ptolemy, seems for a time to have been associated as joint ruler with his father, and to have succeeded in his own right in AD 23.⁴ Juba had had little success at keeping control over his own people. Nor did his son. He faced rebellion among his subjects under the leadership of the famous Tacfarinas, which was finally suppressed in 24 by the Romans. Not much credit for its suppression could properly be claimed by Ptolemy, who devoted little energy to his kingdom's problems, and as a ruler seems to have been feckless and incompetent. Although he did participate in the campaigns against the rebels he possibly did more harm than good. Despite this, he was clearly viewed as a figure of some distinction in the outside world. His statue stood in Athens in the gymnasium of his ancestor Ptolemy Philadelphus, and the assembly of Lycia also voted him one at Xanthus.⁵ The Romans probably viewed him as little more than a mediocrity, but they knew the importance of public diplomacy. As a demonstration of good will a member of the senate was dispatched in AD 24 to present Ptolemy with the traditional gifts of an ivory sceptre and a *toga picta*, the triumphal toga with gold stars on a purple ground, which his father may also have won earlier. On his coins we see the sceptre, together with the curule chair that must have been part of the gift, as well as the *toga picta* and gold crown.⁶

Ptolemy's lacklustre contribution to the campaign against the rebels is the last recorded event of his reign. Immediately before a major gap in his text Dio briefly informs us that he was put to death by Caligula. This is included under the events of AD 40. That is consistent with the numismatic and epigraphic evidence.⁷ The literary sources provide two further details. Suetonius says that Caligula invited Ptolemy to his presence and received him with honour, but suddenly had him executed simply because when the emperor was presenting a show, he noticed that Ptolemy, on entering the theatre, attracted general attention by the splendour of his purple cloak (*abolla*). Finally, Seneca claims to have seen him in prison before his execution. All of this seems to suggest that Ptolemy was summoned to Italy, imprisoned, and executed *after* Caligula's return from the north, sometime after the spring of 40.⁸

This straightforward scenario seems, however, to be cast into some confusion by Dio, who mentions Ptolemy's death between Caligula's stay in Lyons and his 'campaign' on the English channel, *before* his return to Rome.⁹ But Dio will at times treat material in a thematic rather than strictly chronological format, as when he includes the brief notice of the British 'campaign' under 39 though it surely belongs to 40.¹⁰ Hence Dio may have lumped the summons and the execution together, even though they were two distinct and possibly widely separated events. The most plausible scenario is probably that Ptolemy was summoned in early 40 and journeyed to Italy to meet the emperor on the latter's return from the north.¹¹ Their meeting took place outside the city limits, after which Ptolemy was denounced and imprisoned in the city, where he was seen by Seneca. Sometime later, he was executed.

The incorporation of Ptolemy's kingdom of Mauretania into the empire can be defended on strategic grounds, and reflects a concern about military security that is matched also by a change in the command structure of the African legion (see below). But the usual fate of loyal kings who lost their kingdoms was honourable exile, often in considerable comfort. Ptolemy is the only client king to have been executed. Why should he be the exception?¹² We cannot put it down to arbitrary cruelty. Seneca points out that Mithridates (of Armenia) was imprisoned at the same time, and suffered only exile. Dio suggests that Caligula needed Ptolemy's wealth, his standard explanation for almost all the emperor's egregious conduct at this time, and largely belied by his generosity to Herod Agrippa and Antiochus IV of Commagene.¹³ Another explanation stems from the story of the purple cloak and has Ptolemy invited to Rome to consecrate the sanctuary of Isis in the Campus Martius and wearing a long flowing robe for the occasion, which aroused Caligula's rivalry.¹⁴ But such a complex, if ingenious, scenario is not necessary to explain the cloak. Ptolemy would probably have been lured to Rome in the hope of receiving some kind of honour, as hinted in Suetonius' account. He was a ruler who lived in considerable splendour, and would have worn robes that he felt appropriate to this important occasion. Under Augustus client princes had worn the plain toga. This rule had been relaxed under Tiberius, and they were then allowed to wear purple. As the son of Cleopatra Selene (Antony's daughter), and thus a relative of the emperor, Ptolemy might have felt entitled to avail himself of this privilege, but Caligula may well have restricted its use.¹⁵ The splendid robes would have added a particular irony to Caligula's denunciation of him. If he was in fact wearing the *toga picta*, with its powerful military connotations, granted him in AD 24, this would have served to rub salt in Caligula's wound, after the emperor's relatively inglorious achievements in the north.¹⁶

Given the context of Ptolemy's execution, and the severity of his punishment, there is a strong possibility that he might somehow have been caught up in one of the current plots against the emperor. The father of Gaetulicus, the legate in Germany executed as a conspirator (see [Chapters 6 and 8](#)), had campaigned alongside Ptolemy's father Juba II, and this family association might have

encouraged the younger Gaetulicus to involve Ptolemy in his intrigues, inducing him perhaps by the promise of an independent kingdom.¹⁷ Alternatively he might have been drawn in by Caligula's sisters, his relatives. Certainty in the whole matter, as so often in the reign of Caligula, is unattainable, and the death of Ptolemy remains yet another of the mysteries of the years 39 and 40.

The decision to incorporate Mauretania into the empire is not too difficult to understand, given its previous history. The earlier rebellions had shown how exposed Africa Proconsularis was to its east, and the lacklustre performances of Ptolemy and his father before him had demonstrated how incapable the Mauretanians were at guaranteeing the security of the province, or of the Roman colonies within Mauretania itself. In this light, Caligula's action can be seen as prudent and reasonable. But, not surprisingly, it met with resistance among Ptolemy's old supporters in Mauretania. Pliny informs us that on the ruler's death a revolt broke out under Aedemon, one of his freedmen.¹⁸ The Roman forces that suppressed it were probably commanded by Marcus Licinius Crassus Frugi (see [Appendix 1](#)). The rebellion seems to have been fairly widespread, and is attested in the archaeological record.¹⁹ Part of the city of Volubilis was destroyed by fire. There is evidence of destruction in the south-west area of the forum at Lixus, and Tamuda was burnt to the ground, pillaged and abandoned by the population. In the last two towns there is a long gap in the numismatic sequence after the last coins of Ptolemy, suggesting that the destruction immediately followed the end of his reign.²⁰ In parts of the kingdom there was clearly popular support for the Romans. From Volubilis in the west an inscription has survived honouring Marcus Valerius Severus, son of Bostar (the father's name is a Latinised form of the Punic Bodastart or Bod'star). He was a local worthy, a *sufes* (a Punic term for an official) and duovir, and first priest in the imperial cult. He is recorded as having commanded the auxiliary forces in the war against Aedemon (this is the only surviving mention of Aedemon's name apart from the reference in Pliny). This show of loyalty stood Marcus and Volubilis in good stead with Rome. Marcus afterwards was sent on an embassy to Claudius and secured Roman citizenship and other rights for the inhabitants.²¹

Mauretania was organised into two separate provinces, Mauretania Tingitana and Mauretania Caesariensis, in the territories around Tingis and Caesarea respectively, separated by the river Malua. The sources are in disagreement about when this division took place. Pliny claims that it was the work of Caligula. Dio, however, explains that in 42 fighting broke out once again, to be subdued by the vigorous campaigns first of Suetonius Paulinus then of Hosidius Geta, and only after this, according to Dio, was the territory divided into two administrative districts, by Claudius.²² The appointment of the regular (equestrian) governors can hardly have occurred earlier than 43; the first to appear in the record was Marcus Fadius Celer Flavianus, in office in 44.²³ Pliny may simply have got the chronology confused; at best it might mean that Caligula made the decision to divide the province, but that the implementation had to be postponed because of the uprising.²⁴

The constant rebellions in the region revealed not only the weakness of the rulers of Mauretania but also the unsatisfactory arrangement by which the defence of Africa Proconsularis remained a senatorial responsibility. It was only a matter of time before the anomaly would have to be sorted out, since apart from any strictly strategic considerations there was also the political danger of concentrating into the hands of a single governor who was not an imperial appointee the control both of troops and of an economically powerful province. Caligula took what was in reality an inevitable step, removing the command of the legion from the proconsular governor and placing it under an imperial legate. The precise circumstances of the reorganisation are unclear. We have conflicting testimony on who was governor when the change was instituted and are given a choice between Marcus Junius Silanus and Lucius Calpurnius Piso. Tacitus, in describing the difficulties at the beginning of Vespasian's reign in 69, and the murder of the proconsul of Africa by the commander of the legion, explains that when Silanus was proconsul (at an unspecified date) Caligula was afraid of him, so took the legion away and gave it to a legate. This, he says, resulted in increasing power for ambitious legates, while the proconsuls showed less and less initiative. Dio, on the other hand, says (under 39) that when Piso, son of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso and Plancina (the couple charged with Germanicus' murder), was chosen to be governor of Africa, Caligula feared that he would lead a revolt, and so divided the province into two parts, assigning the troops and the Numidians to a legate, an arrangement that Dio notes continued down to his own day.²⁵ The contradictions between the two sources have attracted much scholarly attention (see [Appendix 2](#)), but the broad outlines of the change are clear enough. Clearly, Caligula's action was a sound one, dictated by a sober evaluation of the circumstances, rather than by fear or hatred, as Dio and Tacitus suggest. Moreover, he seems to have sought to introduce a minimum of disruption to the established system. He could, after all, simply have taken Africa from the senate.

The province of Africa continued to be an anomaly after Caligula. While Tacitus' claim that the shared command created widespread confusion may be somewhat exaggerated, in order to explain the disasters of 69, the later history of Africa shows that there was an awkward overlap of functions, mainly because of the need for the legionary legate to retain strategic flexibility. He would have to intervene wherever the military situation demanded, as shown by the presence, from Vespasian's time on, of the legate's name alone on the milestones throughout the province, where he was involved in settling internal territorial disputes.²⁶ The legate provisioned his troops in the granaries of Hadrumetum or Utica (in the civil zone), and had the responsibility for the division of the tribes into cantons.²⁷ Also, curiously, the proconsul might occasionally have special powers. Galba, for instance, seems as governor of Africa to have been given command of an army in Africa to deal with internal strife.²⁸ A cohort could be detached from the legion and placed under the authority of a proconsul, as suggested in a speech of Hadrian.²⁹ There was also an urban cohort in Carthage.³⁰ As Dio explains the arrangement, there was a division not only of powers but also of territory. The

proconsul would administer the district around Carthage, with the legate basically taking over the less settled region of Numidia.³¹ But the division could not have been hard and fast. For instance, in Cirta, which must have been in the legate's zone, we find Quintus Marcius Barea, proconsul 41–3, making a dedication to the deified Livia.³² The measure taken by Caligula was, in fact, only one step in a much longer process, which reached its natural conclusion at the end of the second century under Septimius Severus, with the creation of a separate province of Numidia.

Appendix 1: the Roman commander during Aedemon's rebellion

The most likely candidate for commander of the Roman forces during the rebellion is Marcus Licinius Crassus Frugi. According to Suetonius he received the *ornamenta triumphalia* for a *second* time in 43 AD for his exploits in Britain (Suet. *Claud.* 17.3). The first occasion might have been in Mauretania. He seems to have been legate there under Claudius, as suggested by the restoration of an inscription found in Rome, which identifies him as *leg(atu)s Ti. Claudi Caesaris Aug(usti) Ge[r]manici in M[au]retani]a* (*ILS* 954; on the restoration, see Gascou 1974: 300–1). Against this identification it is argued that there is no mention of Crassus in Dio's account, in contrast to the detailed information Dio provides about the commands of Suetonius Paulinus and Gnaeus Hosidius Geta, whose successive campaigns had finally crushed the rebellion by 42. The title of *legatus* would be without parallel in Mauretania, since the kingdom was organised into two Mauretaniae governed by equestrian Prefects. Also, it is argued that there would not have been enough time for Crassus to be given office by Claudius, since Suetonius Paulinus seems to have been appointed in 41. Those supporting the notion of Crassus as commander include: Cagnat 1912: 30; *PIR*¹ L 130; Carcopino 1943: 182, 191; Pflaum 1950: 37, n. 2; Romanelli 1959: 260; Rachet 1970: 133; Nony 1986: 351. Those against include: Groag 1926: 342–3; Weinstock 1930: 2373; Thomasson 1960: 241; Fishwick 1971: 479.

A clue to a possible solution of the problem is offered by Dio 60.8.6 (see Gascou 1974: 303). He tells us that Claudius was persuaded to adopt the *ornamenta triumphalia* for his exploits in Mauretania even though he had not achieved anything there and the war had been brought to an end before he came to power. If Crassus had been appointed by Caligula on the outbreak of the rising of Aedemon in mid-40, and had crushed it by the end of January 41, it is quite conceivable that his command would have been extended by Claudius, thus making him that emperor's *legatus*. If Claudius claimed the credit for the earlier victory, Dio's comment would make sense (although the *ornamenta triumphalia* normally went to the commander in the field). Crassus clearly enjoyed Claudius' favour, as evidenced by his later role in Britain and the fact that in 41 Claudius gave his daughter Antonia in marriage to Crassus' son Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Suet. *Claud.* 27.2, 29.2; Dio 60.5.7). The use of the title *legatus* need not be a problem. Gascou 1974: 308 argues

that, between the death of Ptolemy and the organisation of the two provinces, Mauretania was governed by a single *legatus* instead of two equestrian Prefects, as it would be in a time of emergency under Vespasian in 75 (*ILS* 8969). Moreover, the absence of any reference to Crassus in Dio's account could be explained by the fact that there is a gap in Dio's manuscripts after his coverage of the death of Ptolemy. The *Index* to Dio's Book 59 shows that the missing section dealt with the incorporation of Mauretania into the empire.

Appendix 2: proconsuls of Africa under Caligula

Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.48) and Dio (59.20.7) are in disagreement about who was proconsul of Africa when the change in the command of the legion stationed there was instituted. Tacitus provides the name of Marcus Junius Silanus, Dio of Lucius Calpurnius Piso.

Dio's candidate, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, might for a time have suffered the stigma of parents widely believed to be the murderers of Germanicus. All the same his career was not seriously hampered, since he achieved the consulship in AD 27 and was *praefectus urbi* in 37 when Caligula came to power. Dio states that he was proconsul of Africa in 39, but we have no further evidence for this appointment and do not know if his term was supposed to be 38/39 or 39/40; newly appointed governors of senatorial provinces normally left Rome with their staff by mid-April to allow them to begin their term of office by mid-summer (see Dio 60.17.3). Among others, for 38/9: Pallu de Lessert 1896: 120; de Laet 1941: nr. 555; Romanelli 1959: 248; for 39/40: *PIR*² C 293; Thomasson 1960: 2.30. He may afterwards have been governor of Dalmatia under Claudius, and seems to have survived until the reign of Vespasian (*ILS* 5952, on which, see Wilkes 1969: 443).

Marcus Junius Silanus was consul in 19 and was married to Aemilia Lepida, daughter of Aemilius Paullus (consul 1 AD) and Julia (the granddaughter of Augustus). Other than providing the consular date of AD 19 he is not mentioned in Tacitus' *Annals* and the only literary information on his term in Africa is found in his *Histories* where we are told that Caligula feared him (4.48, *metuens*). He is identified in inscriptions as governor of Africa, but they do not provide his dates (*PIR*² I 839; Benabou 1972: 131). One of his officers in Africa was the *praefectus fabrum* Gaius Maenius Bassus. In an inscription from Tibur this man is said to have served Silanus *sexto (anno)*, which seems to imply the sixth year of the latter's governorship (*ILS* 6236). There would be a precedent for such a term of office. Publius Petronius seems to have had a six-year term in Asia (29/30 to 34/35), to judge from the coin issues of Pergamum and Smyrna (see Syme 1955: 30). Now Vibius Marsus was governor of Africa to 30, and Silanus seems to have been in Rome in 32 (Tac. *Ann.* 6.2.2). The period 32–38 or 33–39 would thus seem to accommodate best a six-year term (see Hohl 1919). Unfortunately, the inscription from the Triumphal Arch of Tiberius at Leptis indicates that the proconsul in Africa in 35/36 was not Silanus, but Gaius Rubellius Blandus, husband of Julia,

the daughter of Tiberius' son, Drusus (*IRT* 330ab, 331; Syme 1981b: 198). We know that Blandus was in Rome towards the end of 36, and if Silanus succeeded him it could have been at the most for three years, from 36 to 39. If, however, we assume that the *sexto* reference applies not to Silanus but to Bassus, and means that Bassus served *his own* sixth year as *praefectus fabrum* under Silanus, but had served earlier under other proconsuls, then a three-year term for Silanus could be made to harmonise with the inscriptional evidence; see Thomasson 1960: 28; 1966: 31–2; 1969: 179–84.

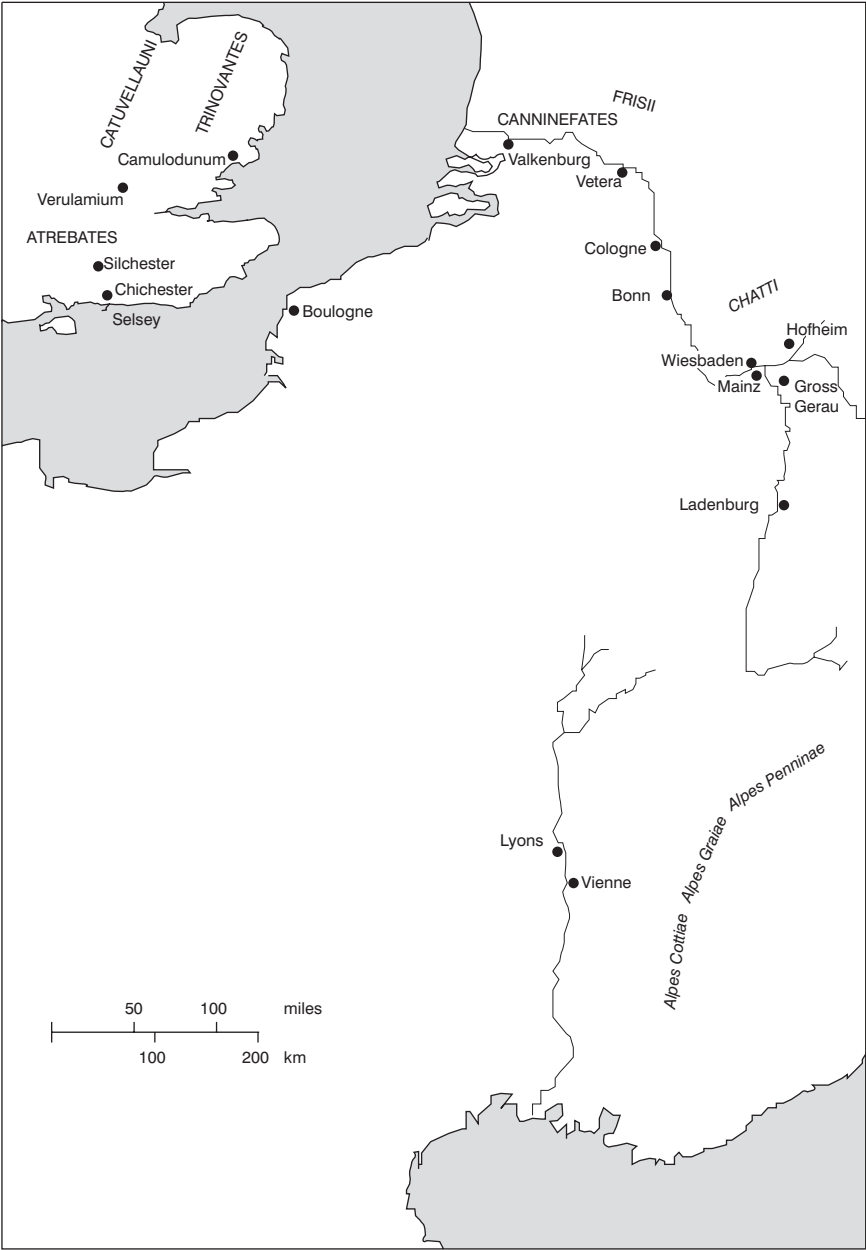
Silanus could have been appointed proconsul in Africa in 36, and have had his term prorogued for one or two years (until July 38 or 39). Under this construction his successor Piso would have taken over the office in July 38 or 39. Hence Silanus could have been proconsul when the decision was made to change the organisation of the legionary command and Piso could have been first to be subjected to that change; the testimonies of Tacitus and Dio would thus be reconciled (Romanelli 1959: 248; Thomasson 1960: 1.11, 2.30; Benabou 1972: 132).

Syme offers a more radical solution to the contradiction. He suggests that in fact the term of Silanus did not fall in Caligula's reign, and that he served from 30 to 35 (to be succeeded not by Piso but by Rubellius Blandus). Proconsular years run from summer to summer, and Silanus would thus have served for only five proconsular years, while Bassus' *sexto* might refer to a calendar year. The confusion over the change in command, Syme believes, stems from a simple mistake of Tacitus. The historian may have conflated Silanus, governor of Africa, who probably did not survive Tiberius, with Caligula's father-in-law of the same name, Marcus Junius Silanus, who, as has been shown, was indeed mistrusted by Caligula (Syme 1981b: 201; followed by Vogel-Weidemann 1982a: 103–5).

Notes

- 1 See Fishwick and Shaw 1977; also Gsell 1928: 196; Benabou 1972: 129–30.
- 2 Pliny *NH* 18.35.
- 3 Sall. *Bj* 18.1–2; Dio 53.26.2.
- 4 For a general account of Ptolemy, see Firpo 1986b: 242–53.
- 5 *IG* III. 555, 612; *OGIS* 197, 198; possibly *Ej* 164.
- 6 Tac. *Ann.* 4.23.1, 26.4; Mazard 1955: nos. 440–50; Alexandropoulos 2000: nos. 258, 286, 295, 302, 313, 321, 330, 335.
- 7 Dio 59.25.1. The last coins of Ptolemy are minted in the twentieth year of his reign (he had been joint ruler with his father since 21) and the era of Mauretania as a province begins in 40; Mazard 1955: no. 496; Alexandropoulos 2000: no. 348; *CIL* 8.8630.
- 8 Sen. *Tranq.* 11.12; *Suet. Cal.* 35.1. Gsell 1928: n. 1, 8.285 places the execution in September, when Caligula was in Campania; Woods 2005 suggests that the cloak, *abolla*, is a mistake for *abolas* in Suetonius' Greek source, a word found in connection with horses not shedding their teeth, and here used in the sense of Ptolemy not shedding his hair (unlike the balding Caligula); Malloch 2004b: 40 argues that Suetonius' use is bathetic, to play down the military associations of the cloak that Ptolemy was wearing.
- 9 Carcopino 1943: 197 placed Ptolemy's death in Lyons and argued that the incident of the purple cloak happened in the federal amphitheatre there, where Caligula was celebrating games in 39/40. Ptolemy would have had to be received in Rome in 39

- and imprisoned in the city (to be seen there by Seneca), then summoned to Gaul from Rome, not Mauretania, in early 40 (see Fishwick 1971: 470).
- 10 Dio 59.21.3.
 - 11 See Malloch 2004b: 41–2.
 - 12 See the summary at Wardle 1994: 270–2.
 - 13 Dio 59.25.1.
 - 14 Hofmann 1959: 1780; Nony 1986: 350 suggests rivalry between two Isiac princes. On the dating of the Isaeum in the Campus Martius, see [Chapter 14](#).
 - 15 Jos. *AJ* 18.191, 195; Suet. *Aug.* 60; Dio 57.13.5; Reinhold 1970: 40 on the possible restriction by Caligula. The purple may well have come from the dyeing industry that Ptolemy's father had set up on islands off the Atlantic coast (probably Madeira), where he produced 'Gaetulian purple' (Plin. *NH* 6.201).
 - 16 Pointed out by Malloch 2004b: 43, 44–5, who also observes that Ptolemy's cloak might also have been seen by Caligula to be claiming a status for its wearer superior to his own.
 - 17 Fishwick and Shaw 1976 suggest that Gaetulicus might have been taken to Mauretania by his father and have met Ptolemy; see also Braund 1984b: 178. Faur 1973b: 249–71 argues that Ptolemy was planning to seize independence; Lenoir 2001 suggests that Caligula felt that Ptolemy was setting up a rival dynasty.
 - 18 Pliny *NH* 5.11. Pliny states that this happened under Claudius, but the passage in question is too vague for precise chronological evidence. Kotula 1964: 83 argues that there might have been friction between Ptolemy's freedmen and those in the imperial house.
 - 19 Balsdon 1934b: 193–4; Hofman 1959: 1777, n. 12; Romanelli 1959: 258; Rachtel 1970: 128; Fishwick 1971: 474–5 has argued that the rebellion might have been much more limited than traditionally thought.
 - 20 Lixus: Euzennat 1960: 543–4; Tarradell 1960: 158–9. Tamuda: Tarradell 1960: 117. Volubilis: Euzennat 1957: 51; Tarradell 1960: 184.
 - 21 *ILA* 634 (Smallwood 407b).
 - 22 Pliny *NH* 5.2; Dio 60.9.5. Dio seems to put the commands of both Geta and Paulinus into one year, which is hardly possible. It is likely that Paulinus took his command in 41 and Geta in 42.
 - 23 *ILM* 56 Volubilis (Smallwood 407a); strictly speaking, the inscription belongs to Claudius' fourth tribunician year, up to the end of January 45.
 - 24 Gozalbes Cravioto 2005: 196–7 argues that incorporation of Mauretania owed more to Caligula than to Claudius.
 - 25 Tac. *Hist.* 4.48; Dio 59.20.7; Wilkinson 2005: 35 notes that Dio would have been impressed by the notion that Caligula feared the son of his father's enemy. Balsdon 1934b: 155 and Fentress 1979: 68 place the change in AD 37.
 - 26 Pflaum 1960: 1234.
 - 27 *ILAlg* I.ix.
 - 28 Suet. *Galb.* 7.1.
 - 29 *CIL* 8.2532, 18042; on the role of these soldiers see Domaszewski 1967: 63.
 - 30 Cagnat 1912: 211–5.
 - 31 Dio may be anachronistic here, in thinking of Numidia as a separate province, which it became under Septimius Severus; see Edmondson 1992: 171.
 - 32 *CIL* 8.6987, 19492 (*ILA* 11.550).



Map 3 The north west

BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Caligula was descended from a line of celebrated military commanders. Both his father Germanicus and his grandfather Drusus had outstanding reputations as soldiers, reputations that were, at least in the case of his father, in excess of actual talents. His unconcealed penchant for riding in a chariot dressed as a triumphator, or as Alexander the Great, suggests that he himself was not immune to the attractions of military glory, and it was perhaps inevitable that he would eventually feel the need to emulate his forebears. It was on Rome's northern frontier that they had won their laurels, and one of Caligula's earliest memories would have been riding in his father's chariot in AD 17 during the magnificent triumph held to celebrate Germanicus' victories in Germany ([Chapter 1](#)).¹ Caligula set his own sights on the same part of the world, but aimed to achieve a feat of arms that would eclipse even those of his forebears, and would emulate even Julius Caesar. In AD 39 he would seek to extend Rome's *imperium* beyond the Ocean into Britain. He would begin this venture with no previous military experience whatsoever, and in the course of it he would be the first emperor to lead his troops into battle since Augustus' campaigns in Spain in 26–25 BC.

The sources seem to find it difficult to decide how to characterise Caligula's northern expedition. They present it as a frivolous whim, undertaken on the spur of the moment, either to despoil Gaul of its wealth for personal ends, or to raise recruits for the imperial bodyguard. But the notion of a capricious impulse is belied by their descriptions of extensive preparations, preparations requiring a considerable period of time and considerable advance planning. Suetonius reports that Caligula 'held levies everywhere with utter strictness, and brought together supplies of every kind on a scale never before matched' and speaks of the forces 'drawn together from all provinces'. Dio says that he had gathered together, depending on the source, 200,000 or 250,000 troops. Even the lower figure is actually more than twice the normal garrison strength on the Rhine.² Tacitus' denigrating comments on Caligula's military ventures tend if anything to confirm the extent of these preparations, since he speaks of *ingentes adversus Germaniam conatus* ('enormous efforts against Germany') and the *ingentes Gaii Caesaris minae* ('enormous threats of Gaius Caesar').³

It may be possible to identify some of these specific advance measures. In the invasion of Britain that Claudius launched in 43, just over two years after Caligula's death, three of the Rhine legions were used (in addition to Legio IX from Pannonia): II Augusta, IX Hispana and XX Valeria Victrix. Clearly it would not be safe to remove a force this size from the German military zones and leave a defensive vacuum. There is sound evidence that their replacements were provided mainly by the raising of two new legions, XV Primigenia and XXII Primigenia. The first literary reference to these units is much later, in connection with the events of early AD 69, when XV was stationed on the Lower, and XXII on the Upper Rhine. Epigraphic evidence points to their presence there, mainly at Vetera and Mainz respectively, during the later Julio-Claudian period.⁴ They are not among the twenty-five legions known to be in existence in AD 23, and the absence of any reference to their formation in Tacitus' *Annals* suggests that they were formed during the years missing from *Annals*, that is AD 37–47.

Almost certainly, then, these legions were raised to fill the gaps that would be left when the units in Germany departed for Britain. Who raised them? The notion that it might have been Caligula, and that Claudius in 43 essentially implemented an invasion model already initiated by his predecessor, was first proposed in the 1920s.⁵ The most important evidence is epigraphic. The tombstone of a centurion, Tiberius Julius Italicus, records that he served (in this order) in Legio VII Macedonica, XV Primigenia and XII Gemina.⁶ Legio VII Macedonica received the title of Claudia Pia Fidelis for its role in suppressing the mutiny of Scribonianus in Dalmatia in AD 42. The absence of the honorific from the legion's name on the inscription suggests that Italicus had already left that legion before 42 and that XV Primigenia, in which he next served, was already formed before then. Now while it is just possible under this reconstruction to squeeze the raising of the latter into Claudius' reign, the references in Suetonius and Dio to the raising of legions make the case for a Caligulan date for this legion very strong. Moreover the case is strengthened by a military diploma (a folded bronze sheet recording the service of an individual soldier) that indicates recruitment to Legio IX Hispana taking place in AD 39/40, presumably as the legion was being strengthened for the coming campaign. Galba, after his appointment to Germany by Caligula, was involved in the training of raw recruits.⁷ On an escarpment on the west bank of the Rhine, about two miles south of Mainz at Weisenau there is tentative evidence for a short-lived legionary base of the Caligulan period. Since tombstones of XV Primigenia have been found in the area, there is a strong suggestion that the legionary base at Mainz was extended at Weisenau to accommodate the newly raised legions.⁸ The pottery from the vicus (associated civilian settlement) is compatible with activity in the Caligulan period.⁹ This activity may be linked to a nearby auxiliary fort some 3.5 km south of the legionary fortress, with north and south defensive ditches identified (not strictly parallel). It was of short duration. Remains of armour and horse decorations suggest that it was meant to house a cavalry unit, and may date to the Caligula period. South of Mainz at Ludwigshafen-Rheingönheim on the west bank of the Rhine, near the juncture with the Neckar, a legionary fortress

some 20–24 ha in extent has recently been identified and partially excavated, and a double ditch, monumental gateway and centurions' quarters have been excavated. The site does not seem to have had an Augustan–Tiberian phase and was built over in the Flavian period, and the excavators consider a Caligulan attribution very possible but not certain.¹⁰ At Gross-Gerau – Wallerstädten aerial photography recently detected features in the vicinity of a previously known Roman auxiliary fort. Subsequent excavations in 2005 and 2008 exposed the 'V' profile ditches that are the hallmarks of Roman military defences. Other than a baking oven no buildings were found, but the ditches on two adjoining sides (their full length unknown) revealed that the site was at least 15 ha in area, and the uniformity of the ditch fill indicated a temporary camp. Metal detectors brought to light some 180 coins, with a concentration of Tiberius' *Providentia* asses (*RIC*² 1.81), issued AD 22–30. There was a single worn Caligulan, no Claudian, two Neronian and a large number of Vespanianic pieces. This suggests a break in occupation in the late Tiberian or early Caligulan period and reoccupation under the Flavians.¹¹ A possible context could be that in its first phase it served as a temporary camp for vexillations of Legion XV or XXII after they had been raised by Caligula, and was abandoned when they were moved to Mainz-Weisenau. The nearby auxiliary fort may belong to the same phase of activity but its dating evidence is scant and it has been assigned to the broad period between Augustus and before Vespasian.

Such widespread preparations would have had repercussions on legionary dispositions well away from the combat zone. It has been suggested that Legio XV Apollinaris (distinguish Legio XV Apollinaris from Legio XV Primigenia), stationed at Vindobona (modern Vienna) during the reign of Tiberius was moved to its new irregular polygonal legionary camp at Carnuntum on the Danube (midway between Vienna and Bratislava) in AD 39. It would have occupied the wood and earth phase of the site, replaced by stone under Claudius.¹² At any rate it is clear that the massive preparations preclude the notion, found not only in the ancient sources, but also among modern scholars, that the northern expedition was anything other than a campaign that had been seriously planned.

Britain had previously been invaded by Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BC. He had achieved some military success, but recognised that continued Roman presence in the island would place an excessive strain on his resources. He made treaties and imposed tribute, and was able to present his limited victories as a conquest of sorts. Given the dynamics of imperialism it was inevitable that Romans would one day return to the island. Augustus for a time envisaged its reconquest, a hope that would have been shattered by Varus' defeat in Germany in AD 9. Tiberius adopted a generally cautious policy on the Roman frontiers and would have considered an expedition against Britain a reckless venture. Caligula doubtless shared with many Romans an impatience with Tiberius' restraint, and he clearly had the temperament to take up the expansionist banner once again. But there are also grounds for concluding that quite apart from Caligula's personal desire for glory, circumstances in Britain were such that an invasion might well be politically and strategically justified.

Information on this period of British history is based largely on coin evidence, and great caution must be exercised in drawing political conclusions from the discovery of particular coins in particular locations.¹³ But some basic inferences can be drawn. The chief opponents of Julius Caesar had been the Catuvellauni, located in the Hertfordshire area with their capital from about 20 BC at Prae Wood near Verulamium (St. Albans). After Caesar's departure they seem to have lived up to their agreements with the Romans and to have paid regular tribute. Between about 20 and 15 BC, however, Tasciovanus came to power, the first British king to mint coins inscribed with his name. He initiated an aggressive policy and by the time of his death between AD 5 and 10 the Catuvellaunian territory stretched from Northamptonshire to the Thames. One rare coin issue shows the mint of Camulodunum (Colchester), perhaps indicating expansion east into the kingdom of the pro-Roman Trinovantes of Essex. To the south of the Catuvellauni, beyond the Thames, lay the Belgic kingdom of the Atrebates, with its capital at Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). It appears to have been founded by Commius, the Gallic Atrebatian, who had fallen out with Julius Caesar and fled from him. Under Commius' son, Tincommius, this was potentially another hostile area, which, because of its proximity to Gaul, could be a strategically sensitive region for the Romans.

From the mid-30s to the 20s BC, talk of an invasion of Britain was very much in the air in Rome, to judge from the pronouncements of poets like Horace. At some point, however, Augustus decided to postpone the planned conquest in favour of a diplomatic policy, probably to leave himself free to campaign beyond the Rhine. Strabo says that the Romans could, in fact, have conquered Britain but that it was not considered worth the effort required. He also notes that leading British figures paid honours to Augustus and made offerings on the Capitol, thus making the whole island in a sense Roman property.¹⁴ It is possible that the change in Roman policy can be dated to Augustus' visit to Gaul in 16 BC, which might have resulted in some sort of agreement with Tincommius' successor, his son Tincomarus. Roman pottery does begin to turn up in large amounts in Atrebatian territory at Calleva from about that time. Tincomarus was obliged to flee to Rome before AD 7 (his arrival appears to be recorded in Augustus' *Res Gestae*) probably because of internal dissent within his kingdom.¹⁵ He was succeeded by his brother Eppillus (for a short time), then by another brother Verica, who reigned until the accession of Claudius and seems to have maintained Tincomarus' policy of rapprochement with Rome.

North of the Atrebates, Tasciovanus of the Catuvellauni was succeeded by his son Cunobelinus (Shakespeare's Cymbeline), the most famous of the British kings of the period, who would reign for some forty years. Under him the old conflict with the pro-Roman Trinovantes seems to have been brought to a final conclusion, since we eventually find Cunobelinus minting coins from the old Trinovantian capital of Camulodunum (Colchester). It is probably no coincidence that this development dates roughly to the time of Varus' defeat in AD 9. After the disaster, Augustus may well have decided to seek an accommodation with the

powerful king. This is suggested by the considerable trade with Rome, evidenced at Camulodunum by large quantities of imported amphorae (mainly Italian, but also some from Spain), used to bring in oil and wine, as well as plates and drinking vessels.

Tiberius' personal inclination would have been to continue Augustus' policy of cooperation, and indeed his diplomatic approach seems to have paid dividends, when, in AD 16, Roman soldiers cast ashore in Britain were returned to the continent by local British rulers. On the negative side, however, he would have been little inclined to check Cunobelinus' expansion into the pro-Roman territory of the Atrebatas, south of the Thames. Cunobelinus' brother Epaticcus seems to have established himself at Calleva by AD 25. The regular silver coins of Epaticcus have on one side a head of Hercules and on the other an eagle with a snake in its talons. Silver coins of an identical type are found, but with the reading CARA instead of abbreviations of Epaticcus' name. These coins almost certainly belong to Cunobelinus' celebrated son, Caratacus, Caradoc of Welsh legend.¹⁶ The Atrebatas were thus being subjected to enormous pressure from the north, and their kings may well have looked to Rome to resist this hostile expansion. If so they would not have found in Tiberius a very receptive audience.

By the time of the Claudian invasion in AD 43 Cunobelinus was dead, and had been succeeded by his two violently anti-Roman sons, Togodumnus and Caratacus, and the Atrebatas kingdom was on the verge of defeat. By then Verica had sought refuge with Claudius, and his enemies had penetrated the kingdom thoroughly – pedestal urn material of the Catuvellaunian type has been discovered even at Selsey, the southern tip of Atrebatas territory.¹⁷ There was an obvious danger by 39 that the whole of southern Britain could fall into hostile hands, and could threaten to foment constant trouble in Gaul. Caesar had noted almost a century earlier that there were close links between Britain and the continent and that hostile tribes in Gaul were invariably aided by support from Britain.¹⁸ If ever direct Roman intervention could be justified strategically, it was now.

In the propaganda leading up to Caligula's departure for the north, Germany, in fact, figures more prominently than does Britain.¹⁹ Suetonius reports rumours that the massive scale of his bridge over the Bay of Naples was intended to overawe both Germans and the Britons. Dio suggests that whereas Caligula's real intention was to plunder Gaul, and also Spain, his professed aim was a campaign against *Germany* (Britain is later added by Dio almost as an afterthought). Philo, moreover, reports that the Jews demonstrated their loyalty to Caligula by sacrificing three times, first on his accession, next after his recovery from illness and third 'for the hope of a victory in Germany'.²⁰ Yet it seems inconceivable that there could have been any notion of a major expedition into Germany, whose only strategic purpose could be to extend Roman power beyond the Rhine. The disaster of Varus would have been a constant object lesson of the risks involved, and Caligula was surely astute enough to appreciate that his father's campaigns had come within a hair's breadth of disaster. Britain, where Julius Caesar had shown that the military opposition was not nearly so powerful and conquest was

feasible, must have seemed to Caligula, as it would later to Claudius, a potentially far more rewarding theatre of operations. It would, of course, have been disastrous to attempt an invasion of Britain and a major launch into Germany at the same time. But the two regions are strategically intertwined. To place an army in Britain without securing the eastern flank of Gaul against German incursions would be to court disaster, since a successful breach of the Rhine frontier by the enemy would cut off the Roman supply line and leave their army isolated in Britain. It was absolutely essential for a successful British campaign that the Rhine frontier be secured. Caligula's German policy, while tactically aggressive, would thus ultimately have had a defensive purpose.²¹

While the overriding necessity of securing the German frontier before invading Britain might, arguably, have been beyond Caligula's grasp of military strategy, it would certainly have been evident to the man he appointed to be his commander of the German operations. Servius Sulpicius Galba was a professional soldier who had previously served in Aquitania and who, after his German victories (culminating in the *ornamenta triumphalia*), was so valued by Claudius that a rumour of his illness in 43 was said to have persuaded the emperor to postpone the British campaign.²² Later in the 40s he was sent to handle a serious uprising in Africa.²³ He was an excellent choice by Caligula to replace Gaetulicus, as part of a pattern of enlightened appointments made throughout the reign. Publius Gabinius Secundus, another competent and professional soldier, was appointed to Lower Germany, perhaps to replace Lucius Apronius, if he had not departed earlier. Galba would have recognised that to strengthen Rome's position in the frontier area would be no light task. There are clear signs that there had been considerable laxity in the frontier defence in recent years. In 28 the Frisii (Frisians) took advantage of the general neglect and revolted, crucifying some of the Roman troops sent to collect taxes. Apronius was unable to maintain control and summoned reinforcements from Upper Germany. He travelled down the Rhine to Frisian territory, where he suffered a great disaster. The Romans were forced to retreat without burying their dead, and Tacitus reports that it was discovered only later that 900 men had held out until the next day and then were taken as exhausted prisoners and slaughtered in the grove of Baduhenna. Some 400 committed suicide. No proper measures were taken to deal with the disaster, and its true dimension was kept hidden from the public. Problems were also rife in Upper Germany, under the casual control of Gaetulicus. He seems to have been unable to contain the pressure from German tribes to the east; they broke over the Rhine and caused major devastation in Gaul at some stage in the latter part of Tiberius' reign.²⁴ A serious factor was Gaetulicus' inability, or unwillingness, to impose discipline, and it may be that he was seeking to strengthen his political base by courting the popularity of his troops. Dio, though meaning to compliment him, hints at this eagerness to please his men, observing that Gaetulicus was a man of honour, who had remained governor of Upper Germany because he was acceptable to the soldiers. Tacitus is more blunt, stating that *mirum amorem adsecutus est* ('he had sought excessive popularity') and that he was a man *effusae clementiae*

modicus severitate ('of much clemency, restrained in handing out punishment').²⁵ The archaeological record seems to confirm that the army of Upper Germany was unable to control the movements of German tribes. There are indications, based on grave goods, that German settlers, probably Suebic, moved into certain regions that should have been under the control of the Roman army, on the lower Neckar near Ladenburg and close to the upper Rhine at both Diersheim and Gross-Gerau; Nierhaus has argued that they represent advanced posts of local militia, granted land in return for their services in protecting the frontier.²⁶

Galba's prime task on taking up his command would have been to impose strict discipline. He blocked requests for leave and got the soldiers into good fighting condition by hard work. He gave them minutely detailed instructions about the behaviour expected – even to the extent that they were not allowed to applaud at festivals. Commanders who were dilatory in mustering their men promptly were dismissed. Centurions who had grown too old for the task, or whose health was not up to their duties, were relieved of their office. A number of unsatisfactory soldiers were discharged, receiving only 6,000 sesterces, half the normal discharge pension. The soldiers themselves offer the best testimony for the impact of the new regime: they soon began to recite the tag, *disce miles militare, Galba est non Gaetulicus* ('learn to be a soldier, soldier, don't make a fuss, Galba's here, not Gaetulicus!').²⁷

Galba is unlikely to have assumed his new command much earlier than October 27, AD 39, when Gaetulicus was executed. Thus apart from the general strategic objections to a major invasion of Germany, given that Galba would have had to invest considerable time in restoring discipline, it would have been too late in the year for a full-scale campaign. He probably placed his focus on putting a stop to the German incursions. Suetonius strongly implies that Galba spent a considerable period of time on the frontier without the presence of Caligula; by the time Caligula did arrive, possibly not until early 40, the armies had been brought up to a high standard of preparation.²⁸ Because Caligula's reign is so short it is difficult to assign military sites confidently to his period, rather than to the reign of his successor, Claudius. The legionary base at Mainz-Weisenau has already been mentioned. Ritterling has made a strong argument for a Caligulan date for the roughly polygonal base at Hofheim at the junction of the Main and Wetter, in a good forward defensive position to prevent movement towards the east bank of the Rhine.²⁹ Wiesbaden, located on the east side of the Rhine from Mainz, may also have been the site of a Caligulan fort, and it has also been suggested that there could have been a Caligulan base at Gross-Gerau.³⁰ All of this might well suggest that Galba's main concern was control of the fierce Chatti, who seem to have displaced the pro-Roman Mattiaci in the regions north of the Main–Wetter. The fact that Galba was still campaigning against the Chatti in 41, when he won a major victory over them, strengthens this supposition. In Lower Germany a Caligulan base for Legio I has been tentatively identified at Bonn, but the main opponents seem to have been the Canninefates down on the North Sea coast east of the Rhine, opposite Batavia. Their ruler is identified by Tacitus as holding out against the Romans during the Caligulan campaign (which provides

the general period but does not necessitate Caligula's presence in that location), and thus bringing his family an acclaim that they still enjoyed during the military uprising in 69.³¹ It may be that the 0.55 ha (1.4 acres) fort at Valkenburg (now Katwijk), in the Netherlands, which has been dated to Caligula's campaign, was built in this period, as part of the strategy of securing the northern end of the Rhine.³² An inscribed wooden tablet records the presence there of a Tigern(i)us who belonged to the third mounted cohort of Gauls. The fort's name, *praetorium Agrippinae*, is recorded in the Tabula Peutingeriana (the famous ancient road map), and it has been suggested that it honours Caligula's mother, but it more likely refers to his sister and was assigned after her marriage to Claudius, in AD 49. The excavator suggests that the intention may have been to strengthen the Roman position near one of the mouths of the Rhine and thus protect supplies being shipped to Caligula's main army. The nearby fort at Roomburg was probably built at the same time.

We have two fairly detailed accounts of Caligula's personal role in the northern expedition, provided by Suetonius and Dio. They are both at pains to present almost every detail of the episode in a negative light.³³ But that is not the most serious problem. Far more serious is that neither provides a coherent and comprehensible sequence of events. The level of confusion is understood by scholars, of course, but they generally do not convey its gravity to their readers. The campaign of Caligula has been characterised as 'farcical and outrageous', and the descriptions of it are just that. We must, however, seek to determine to what degree the farce and outrage can be laid at Caligula's door.³⁴ In Dio's case the confusion in his narrative is aggravated by the loss of a major section of his text at more or less the mid-point in the campaign, and the gap has to be filled by the Byzantine epitomes. Dio has Caligula leave Italy at some point in AD 39, mentioned after his reorganisation of the military command in Africa. His true aim was said to be the exploitation of the wealth of Gaul and Spain (59.21.2). He went first to one of the suburbs, then set out with a large entourage (22.1–2). When he had reached 'there' (*ekeise*) he went a little beyond the Rhine, turned back, then went to the coast, as if intending to invade Britain, but turned back (2–3). The scene without explanation shifts now to Gaul and has Caligula inflicting various woes on the citizens and extracting funds from them (3–6). These did not cover his expenditures, which had been high, especially because of the cost of raising the legions (23.1). We now seem to be back on the campaign, since he says that Caligula was acclaimed imperator even though he had won no battle but engaged only in some contrived military escapades (2). We then seem to have drifted back into his financial exactions in Gaul, which involved the death of some for financial gain (3–4). Dio mentions people who died, headed by the legate Gaetulicus and Caligula's brother-in-law Lepidus (5–6). He then notes the exile of the sisters (6–9). Caligula reported 'these things' (*tauta*) to the senate, and they voted a minor triumph ('ovation') and sent an embassy headed by Claudius to convey the news. He treated the embassy with contempt (23.1–5). A second embassy was sent announcing greater honours, and this he received gladly (6). He now divorced

Paulina and married Caesonia (7). People were generally unhappy, and this was aggravated by the weather, since the heat was so intense that awnings had to be stretched over the forum (8–9). We have now reached the end of AD 39. Caligula entered his third consulship at the beginning of AD 40, *in absentia* (24.1–3). The senate passed various decrees (4–8), and in the meantime Caligula summoned Ptolemy and put him to death (25.1). At this point Dio's manuscript breaks off, and in the epitome provided by the Byzantine historian Xiphilinus, we are back on the English Channel, where Caligula engages in some absurd activities (1–4), then (this is only a summary) he is next in Rome where he is upset with the senate apparently because they had not voted him divine honours (5).

The disorder of Dio's account is patent. We know that Caligula was still in Rome in September (see below), but Dio places the campaigns both on the Rhine and on the English Channel before the end of 39, followed by his divorce, and a description of hot weather that must surely belong to summer. At the beginning of 40 we seem to have him back in Germany on campaign, and oddly the activities on the English Channel are repeated. There is no coherent account of Caligula's travels; he seems somehow to float from one location to another. The mention of the wealth of Spain at the outset is utterly baffling. The whole episode creates the impression that either there has been a dislocation of Dio's text, with a transposition of material from one part to another, or Dio had in fact no good information for what happened and when it happened during the northern campaign (and, of course, suffers from surviving only in epitome from the beginning of AD 40 on).³⁵

This chaotic schema is not clarified by Suetonius, who does not, of course, make claim to a chronological narrative, but arranges his material under thematic rubrics. He says that the emperor was in Mevania (north of Rome) when he realised that he needed recruits for his German bodyguard and so assembled an army on an unprecedented scale. Then he set out at great speed (*Cal.* 43). When he reached his 'camp' (*castra*) he treated the troops severely and dismissed some of them (44.1). All that he achieved was the surrender of Adminius of Britain. He reported the surrender as a great victory (2). Next (*mox*) he engaged in mock combat with the Germans. Finally (*postremo*) he went to the Channel as if to bring the war to an end, and engaged in some absurd pranks (46). He then gave thought to his triumph and sent agents to Rome to prepare it (47). Before leaving the 'province' (*provincia*) he came up with the scheme of punishing the legions, but when they threatened him he fled for Rome (48). On the journey he met an embassy from the senate who were told to convey his threats (49.1). He entered Rome on his birthday (2). It is always important to distinguish between theme and sequence in Suetonius. He seems to place the surrender of Adminius in a sequence following immediately after Caligula's arrival in Germany and before his campaigns there (*mox*) and on the English Channel (*postremo*). But careful attention should be paid to the narrative. Suetonius mentions that the surrender of Adminius was all that Caligula achieved on his northern expedition. But the entry appears before Suetonius has described any of the actual campaigns, and follows the description of his getting his legions battle-ready, and could be

taken as a gloss on those preparations. It could indeed mean that Suetonius is saying that the surrender did in fact precede those preparations. But it is also possible that Suteonius is suggesting that all of the intensive discipline produced very little, only the submission of a minor prince, and is not necessarily making explicit at what point in the whole northern chapter Adminius' surrender actually occurred. It may not necessarily be the case, then, that Suetonius is providing a proper schema of events, and even if his apparent schema is accepted as it stands we should question how clear a picture of the campaign he actually had. The accounts of both Dio and Suetonius are in fact of limited value in reconstructing the sequence of events between Caligula's departure from and return to Rome. It is to be noted particularly that in Suetonius' relatively extensive treatment of the northern campaign (one tenth of the total chapter numbers in the *Life of Caligula*) he never once mentions that Caligula even set foot in Gaul (he does so in other contexts, at 17.1, his sole consulship, 39.1, the auctions), an indication of how little use he is in recreating a reliable itinerary.³⁶ All of this is very frustrating for the modern scholar, since we cannot be sure if Caligula visited the German frontier once or twice, that is, in AD 40 only, or in 39 and again in 40. The sources *seem* to imply the latter, but they do not *explicitly* state that he went to Germany twice (and Dio even implies two visits to the Channel, which would be absurd), and there is the possibility that some of the anecdotes are doublets of a single event.³⁷ If Caligula was present for two 'campaigns' in Germany it would have involved two considerable journeys, some three weeks each way from Lugdunum (Lyons) to Mogontiacum (Mainz), in the winter period. This seems highly unlikely, although it is not, of course, impossible. A single 'campaign' in Germany, followed by the move to the Channel, in AD 40, is considered more likely here, but very tentatively. Moreover, if there was indeed a visit in AD 39 it can surely have been little more than a formality, since Galba spent the initial period of his command in getting the troops ready for battle.

We can be confident that Caligula left Italy in the autumn of 39. Precisely when is uncertain, because we do not know whether he had already crossed the Alps when Gaetulicus' death was reported on October 27. Certainly his departure could hardly have been before early September, when he dismissed the consuls for paying insufficient attention to his birthday (August 31) and too much attention to the celebrations of Actium (September 2).³⁸ This leaves little doubt that he did not set out for an imminent military campaign. A proper military campaign was indeed being planned, but it would not have been implemented in northern Europe in the winter. Romans traditionally brought their campaigns to an end in November and remained in the *hiberna* (winter quarters) until the beginning of the following March.³⁹ This practice seems to have been dictated mainly because of the problems of obtaining fodder, and the dormant period could be extended for bad weather. The sources indicate clearly that the Rhine army was not in a fit state to undertake serious operations when Galba took over, and he needed a considerable period of time to get his troops into fighting shape. Hence there could be no major operation during the remainder of AD 39.

The emphasis that is placed on speed suggests that Caligula's departure was prompted by political, and not military, considerations, almost certainly the apprehended rebellion of Gaetulicus. We are told that he moved with great haste, *festinanter et rapide*, but also in considerable comfort, one feature of which was that he required the inhabitants of the town to sweep the streets for him and sprinkle them with water to keep down the dust.⁴⁰ His first destination would probably have been the city of Lugdunum (Lyons), a journey of over 600 miles, where he made his headquarters. He may have made a brief trip to Germany at this point, but it is possible that he did not leave Gaul for several months, until Galba could ensure that the Rhine frontier was safe enough to visit. Among the entertainments in Lugdunum, he organised oratorical competitions where the losers had to erase their entries with their tongues, or be beaten with rods and thrown into the Rhône. Suetonius includes these activities among the pursuits of the princeps, and they may convey harmless horseplay, rather than serious punishment.⁴¹ But Caligula is also charged with more sinister activities. Dio claims that he spent much of his time gambling and putting to death wealthy Gauls to get his hands on their money. One of these was a certain Julius Sacerdos, who is said to have died even though he was not particularly wealthy, simply because of his name. It has been suggested that Sacerdos might have been one of the Gauls suborned by Gaetulicus. The 'Julius' might suggest that he was a freedman or descendant of a freedman of the imperial family, which would make his treachery seem even greater.⁴² In reality, Caligula had no need to put people to death for their wealth; he seems to have had no problem at all in extracting money from the Gallic provincials, who were eager to ingratiate themselves with the emperor, even voluntarily paying enormous sums simply for an invitation to dinner. They were also easy victims at auctions set up by him, willing to bid extravagantly on any items that had an imperial connection, such as the victory prize at Actium (see Chapter 14).⁴³

While in the north, Caligula continued regular official business, keeping up a continuous stream of correspondence with Rome. Individuals came to deal with him from all quarters of the empire. Herod Agrippa and Antiochus of Commagene seem to have paid court to him in Gaul, a situation that drew complaints that Caligula was coming under the influence of 'tyrant-teachers'.⁴⁴ He also received representatives of the senate, congratulating him on his escape from the plot on his life, and to report that he had been granted an ovation, a lesser triumph. The ovation could be considered an appropriate way to celebrate the 'victory' over Gaetulicus, who was, after all, a Roman, and not a foreign *hostis*. Augustus had celebrated three full triumphs for victories over foreign enemies in Dalmatia, Actium and Alexandria, but an ovation only for his defeat of fellow citizens Brutus and Cassius at Philippi and Sextus Pompeius off Sicily.⁴⁵ The embassy was not a success. Caligula seems by now to have grown paranoid about potential conspiracies and he refused to meet some of the envoys, suspecting them of being spies. Those who were admitted were treated with ill grace, in particular his uncle Claudius. The deputation had been selected by lot, with the single

exception of Claudius, who was appointed directly. The choice seems to have upset Caligula, and he declared himself insulted by the implication that he needed his uncle to watch over him. His unfortunate experiences with his two surviving sisters had perhaps soured him towards his immediate family, and he announced that henceforth none of his relatives was to be honoured. According to Suetonius there were ‘some who claimed’ (*non defuerint qui traderent*) that he threw Claudius into a river fully dressed, perhaps a confusion with the penalties for the losers in the oratorical contests noted above.⁴⁶ There is in fact epigraphic evidence that Caligula’s treatment of Claudius may not have been so cavalier. An inscription, probably of 39, discovered at Lyons, seems to suggest the presence of Caligula and Claudius together at the dedication of some important building. Even more intriguing is the tantalising allusion to a female figure, clearly a person of some importance. She can hardly be one of the sisters, and it opens up the possibility that Caligula’s wife Caesonia (or their recently born daughter Drusilla), was with him in Gaul for some time, perhaps returning to Rome once he departed for Germany.⁴⁷

At the beginning of 40 Caligula entered his third consulship. He did so without a colleague, but both Dio and Suetonius, perhaps using a common source, are at pains to point out that this was not intentional, as some critics claimed. It happened because the consul designate had died just before assuming office and no one could be appointed in his place at such short notice. More remarkably, he had held the office in the previous year. No emperor from 23 BC to AD 40 had held contiguous consulships, and the sequential tenure was a powerful symbol of how far Caligula had moved from the ‘constitutional’ phase of AD 37. His absence from Rome created a hiatus in the conduct of affairs, since the praetors, who should have stood in for the consuls, were apparently afraid to assume the responsibility. Finally, by the twelfth day of the year, Caligula resigned his office, and the suffect consuls designate were able to succeed to their position.⁴⁸

At some stage, probably in the new year, Caligula left Lyons for the German frontier. His first destination was no doubt the legionary base at Mogontiacum (Mainz), where Galba had got both the veterans and new recruits into good fighting shape. What Suetonius calls ‘he and the army’ (*se et exercitum*) made an excellent impression on the emperor, and Suetonius comments that of the forces assembled from every province, no other received greater commendations or greater rewards (the distinction between Galba’s army and the other assembled forces is not made clear, unless there is an unexplained contrast between the armies of Upper and Lower Germany). The information comes not from Suetonius’ account of the northern campaign in the *Caligula* but from the *Galba*, where no proper context is provided. It is difficult to determine how it relates to the account of the first item of campaign as recounted in the *Caligula*, where lax soldiers are admonished.⁴⁹ Perhaps it means that, on the first visit, the troops were in a sorry state, as opposed to their splendid efficiency after a few months under Galba, a contrast that Suetonius does not explicitly make in either *Life* and must be inferred.

There is evidence that even in the military zone Caligula continued to conduct official business. An inscription from Julia Gordus in Asia records the embassy of a certain Theophilus, who travelled with both an administrative and domestic staff 'to Rome, in Germany and with the emperor'.⁵⁰ A memento of Caligula's stay in the Rhine area has been identified in locally produced glass medallions of the period, thought to bear the emperor's image.⁵¹ The high point of this visit (whether his first or his second) would no doubt have been the opportunity afforded Caligula to lead his troops in battle, but it is safe to assume that the enterprise would have been stage-managed to involve a minimum of danger, as when his uncle Claudius personally led the Roman troops into battle in Britain in AD 43. But this does not make Caligula's military engagements frivolous. They would serve to strengthen the bond between the soldiers and an emperor willing to share with them the hardships of campaign.⁵² We have very garbled accounts in Suetonius. He reports that Caligula went across the Rhine with a small detachment of his bodyguard, and that the enemy approached while he was there, but he personally saw no action. As a consequence of this exploit he devised new crowns for those soldiers who had distinguished themselves, *coronae exploratoriae* ('scouting crowns').⁵³ In a section of the *Life* dealing with Caligula's timidity, Suetonius seems to describe the same event, telling how the emperor found himself in a narrow pass on the east bank of the Rhine and fled in panic on the rumour of the enemy's approach, escaping over a crowded bridge by being passed over the heads of his troops. According to Dio, Caligula was acclaimed imperator seven times, without winning a battle or killing a foe, although confusingly he does concede that on one occasion he did manage to capture some of the enemy 'by a ruse' and suggests that he put to death some of the prisoners. He also acknowledges that Caligula did penetrate in person beyond the Rhine. Moreover the supposed acclamations are not reflected on his coinage, and seem to be contradicted by Dio's later assertion that Caligula's successor, Claudius, was hailed imperator several times *contrary to precedent*. Often the literary sources seem unwilling to acknowledge what the evidence tells them. Thus Tacitus twice dismisses Caligula's operations in Germany in one place as a joke (*ludibrium*), but he also twice speaks of them as enormous undertakings. Orosius describes Caligula as 'scouring Germany and Gaul' (*Germaniam Galliamque percurrans*), and Eutropius reports that he did not conduct the campaign with vigour (*nihil strenue fecit*) even though at the same time he states that Caligula undertook a 'war' against the Germans (*bellum contra Germanos suscepit*), and advanced his army into the territory of the Suevi.⁵⁴ The campaign seems to have been serious enough to produce hostages, as hinted in an intriguing section of Suetonius where he talks of hostages being held in a 'grammar school' (*ludus litterarius*), presumably the sons of German chieftains being held by the Romans.⁵⁵

Caligula had no compunction about presenting his achievements as great victories in his report to Rome, and within their limited context they might well have been. 'A laurel has been sent by Caesar for the outstanding defeat of the German youth', wrote Persius, the satirist of the Neronian period, with facetious reference to the *tabellae laureatae*, letters covered in laurel leaves, in which reports

of great victories were traditionally sent to the senate.⁵⁶ It was constitutionally appropriate for emperors to claim the credit for the achievements of their legates, although Caligula may well have been gilding the lily in describing himself as 'on campaign and exposed to great dangers', while the Romans enjoyed 'the pleasures of the circus and the theatre, and their fine villas'. The senate certainly did nothing to discourage such excessive claims; Vespasian proposed that there be special games to honour the emperor's victory over the Germans (he added a personal thanks to him for an invitation to dinner). The victories also seem to have been celebrated throughout the empire, to judge from a relief found at Koula in Lydia. Crudely cut, it depicts a Roman cavalryman with couched spear facing a woman, Germania, whose hands are tied behind her back; it is dedicated to Gaius Germanicus Caesar.⁵⁷

Presumably from Germany, Caligula went on to one of the most celebrated ventures of his exotic reign, his quasi-campaign against Britain. It is difficult to sort out fact from fantasy in the colourful descriptions of this venture. It is very likely that his personal participation in the limited actions against the German frontier tribes immediately preceded his march to the English Channel, thus necessitating a single rather than two separate treks across northern Europe. Dio implies that what he calls the ineffective operations against the Germans were immediately followed by the British episode. Suetonius, while chronologically vague, also associates, if loosely, the British and German campaigns.⁵⁸ But we should not rule out the possibility, even if an unlikely one, that he returned first to Lugdunum. Unfortunately there is a gap in Dio's narrative at the critical point. At the beginning of his account of 40 we are told of events in Rome itself, then of the death of king Ptolemy of Mauretania. The narrative then breaks off, and when it resumes we find Caligula on the shores of the Channel, possibly in the Boulogne area. What takes place next is described in bizarre terms in Dio's epitome, to which a few details can be added from Suetonius.⁵⁹ We are told that after the emperor had drawn up his soldiers in battle line on the shore, along with ballistae and other siege weapons, he went out to sea in a ship (trireme), and then sailed back again. He next took a seat on a high platform and gave the battle signal, suddenly ordering his soldiers to gather up the seashells in their helmets and folds of their tunics, as spoils of the Ocean. These he sent to Rome to be exhibited on the Capitol and Palatine as booty. This episode has provided much grist for the scholarly mill. Most scholars assume that a real invasion might well have been planned at the outset, but cancelled, or postponed, for some reason. One explanation for the cancellation is that the Britons were united in the face of attack, another is that, as happened in 43, the soldiers were simply afraid to undertake the crossing of the Channel, and that the emperor ordered them to pick up the shells as a form of humiliation. This, to say the least, would have been a courageous gesture on Caligula's part.⁶⁰

It seems, in fact, highly unlikely that an actual invasion could have been contemplated at this specific moment.⁶¹ In the first place, despite Galba's successes, the German frontier clearly was not yet secure enough to warrant an invasion

of Britain. The resistance of the Canninefates has already been noted. Even Caligula's own words to the troops in Germany suggest serious problems, given that he quoted the line of the Roman hero Aeneas, who rallied his men at a time when their fortunes were at their lowest ebb: 'Bear up, and preserve yourselves for better times!'⁶² Tacitus states that it was the failure of his strategy against the Germans that obliged Caligula to give up his planned invasion of Britain.⁶³ Suetonius speaks of a major disaster in Germany (he provides no details) after Caligula had returned to Rome in AD 40, and campaigns against the Germans were in fact still going on after Caligula's death in AD 41, when Galba overcame the Chatti and Publius Gabinius conquered the Cauchi.⁶⁴ Also, in the fairly detailed descriptions of the episode no mention is made of the enormous numbers of transports that would have been needed to move the legions to Britain. Caesar, for instance, had over 800 vessels for his invasion (that omission could, however, be explained by the epitomisation of Dio's text).⁶⁵

A much more fundamental objection to the notion that Caligula intended to invade Britain at this juncture, however, is the time of year when this episode was played out. As will become apparent later, he had returned to the vicinity of Rome by the end of May, 40. To get there from the Channel (over 1,000 miles by the shortest route) at the rate of twenty miles a day would have necessitated a journey of some two months, assuming there was no interruption. Suetonius, in fact, indicates that the return to Rome did not occur immediately after the British episode, and implies that the return journey was quite leisurely, since the emperor was met en route by envoys from the senate who begged him to hasten his return. Thus the *very* latest that he could have departed from the Channel was the end of March, and the likelihood is that he did so some time earlier. This means that he was there at a time when it would have been for practical purposes impossible for him to contemplate an expedition against Britain. The ancients were averse to sea voyages during the winter months and Vegetius shows that in theory up to March 10 the seas were closed to shipping (*maria clauduntur*), and were considered unsafe until May 27. The restriction on winter travel was in practice quite often ignored, especially on routine journeys on safe routes, but it is fairly safe to assume that it would not be ignored by Caligula for a sea-borne invasion in northerly regions in a notoriously dangerous passage like the Channel (and Caligula, we must not forget, was no lover of the sea, and could not swim!).⁶⁶ Suetonius reports that to commemorate his victory Caligula constructed a lighthouse, likened to the Pharos of Alexandria. Thus he places the construction of this monument, located at Boulogne (Gesoriacum) and intended to aid the return of ships ferrying men and supplies to Britain, *after* the incident at the Channel. The logical conclusion to draw from this is that the invasion proper had not been cancelled, but was now planned for a later date.⁶⁷

What then did take place at the Channel? One explanation is that although there were actual military operations involved they were not intended as part of a British expedition, but as actions against the Canninefates, in the Rhine delta. If this is so, the sources are, at the very least, misleading; a Roman would naturally

understand a victory over Oceanus to have some connection with Britain, not a tribe at the mouth of the Rhine. In any case, the account as it stands remains still basically absurd, wherever the location. It has also been argued that no serious operations were involved, but rather training manoeuvres along the Channel coast. There are problems in this thesis also. It is not clear why the troops should have gone to this particular location, and it hardly seems likely that they would have used shells as missiles.⁶⁸ But while these recent suggestions might not be wholly convincing, they have the merit of recognising that an actual planned invasion of the island at this time is to be ruled out. The solution might be to carry the argument further, and to recognise that the episode may not have been military at all, but rather political and diplomatic.

Suetonius expressed the view that Caligula's only accomplishment in the north was to receive the surrender of 'Adminius', son of Cunobelinus.⁶⁹ Although he asserts this in the context of Caligula's disciplining his troops his verdict is surely meant to apply to the expedition as a whole. Adminius has been identified with a ruler minting coins in Kent with the legends A, AM or AMMINUS. The affinity of some of the coins of Adminius (or Amminus, as he should strictly be called) with issues of Cunobelinus suggests that he may have obtained his kingdom through the aid and protection of his father, and would have continued to pay allegiance to him. Also, the discovery of a small number of silver minims in Sussex inscribed with an A, and stylistically similar to Adminius' Kent issues, suggests that he may not have fled directly to Caligula, but have sought refuge for a time in Verica's kingdom in Sussex. Suetonius says that Adminius was driven out by his father, but it is possibly more likely that the anti-Roman faction, represented by Caratacus and Togodumnus, had gained the upper hand in parts of the aging Cunobelinus' kingdom (if indeed he was still alive).⁷⁰ It is possible that Adminius was restored to his kingdom by Claudius after AD 43, if he is the Adminius identified as the father of a certain Lucullus who dedicated an altar in Chichester, Sussex.⁷¹

Suetonius does not actually connect Adminius with the specific episode at the Channel (Dio cannot help us here, Adminius is not mentioned in the surviving epitomes of the missing text), but it is not too difficult to understand that a hostile tradition might have downplayed the connection between the two episodes, to make Caligula's activities on the Channel even more meaningless than they already were; Suetonius does hint at a connection, in calling the defection the only actual achievement of Caligula, as if the emperor was somehow directly involved in it, unless Suetonius was simply being facetious. But the two episodes are in fact explicitly linked in the account of the early fifth century Christian writer, Orosius, who says that Caligula set out with a large force, scouring Germany and Gaul, and stopped at the edge of Ocean in view of Britain, and that when he had received the surrender of the son of Cunobelinus he returned to Rome because of a deficiency of war material. Orosius seems to have drawn on Suetonius for his account (there are some clear verbal echoes) but he may well have had an additional source. Tacitus' *Annals* are a possibility, although perhaps an unlikely one, given that the *Annals* were not widely known in Late Antiquity and Orosius'

verifiable references to Tacitus are all to the *Histories*.⁷² But Orosius' version does produce a plausible and reasonably convincing scenario.

Caligula on his departure from Rome would have raised expectations about victories in Britain as well as Germany. To an extent, Galba's achievements on the frontier could be used to satisfy the latter need. But Caligula had begun his northern expedition prematurely, no doubt for political reasons, and the operations on the Rhine had clearly had not eradicated the German threat sufficiently to justify the risk of an invasion of Britain. This is reflected in a passing remark of Tacitus, who said that Caligula definitely intended to invade Britain but that the invasion plan fell through partly because of his fickle temperament but also because his campaigns against Germany had not worked.⁷³ He thus faced the prospect of an enormous loss of face should he be obliged to return with expectations unfulfilled. The 'defection' of Adminius offered a heaven-sent opportunity. It was a development that could be presented as the surrender of a British king, one that rendered armed intervention unnecessary. The 'surrender' would have been staged with due military pomp – a surrender, after all, can properly be made only to superior military forces. Afterwards Caligula granted gifts to the soldiers, specified by Suetonius as 100 denarii each, and characterised as mean. As a reward for a military campaign this may have been a very modest amount, but it was quite ample for participation in an essentially ceremonial or symbolic occasion, and also, incidentally, completely inappropriate if the troops had mutinied.⁷⁴

If it had been arranged that the submission would take place at sea, before Adminius had set foot in Gaul, this would explain Caligula's sailing out in a trireme, as mentioned in Dio. It is noteworthy that Caligula arranged that the trireme should be taken back to Rome to be part of his triumph.⁷⁵ A formal mid-Ocean ceremony would be highly appropriate given the centrality of the notion of the conquest of Oceanus in any victory in Britain.⁷⁶ Thus a collection of shells, the 'booty' of Oceanus, assembled by the troops and intended as part of the offering of spoils for the Capitoline, would not be inappropriate and entirely within Roman traditional practice, and no exotic explanation is necessary.⁷⁷ Some support for this reconstruction is in fact given by Suetonius, who says that after Caligula had received the submission of Adminius he sent a loftily worded letter by swift courier to Rome, which was to be presented to the consuls at a full meeting of the senate in the Temple of Mars Ultor. The general content of the letter is indicated by the phrase *quasi universa tradita insula* ('as if the whole island had been handed over'), in other words, he was representing the incident as the surrender of Britain. The Temple of Mars had been intended by Augustus to be the location where the senate would consider claims for triumphs, and where victors on their return would bring their triumphal insignia.⁷⁸ At their meeting the senators no doubt received his report with appropriate reverence, even if their private inclination might have been to scoff.

Suetonius tells us that Caligula had planned a triumph on a scale never before known and even selected some well-built Gauls who were to dye their hair red and let it grow long, and to learn German, to pass for the conquered enemy in

the celebration; a similar claim will be made about Domitian, who reputedly purchased German-looking captives from traders for his own triumph.⁷⁹ These claims might be ascribed to the hyperbole of hostile sources. But, more tellingly, Persius sarcastically describes Caesonia making lavish preparations for the event, and he relates how he too plans to put on a gladiatorial show as part of the festivities. Persius' joke would have fallen flat, or never even have risen from the ground in the first place, were it in not based on a factual reality. It seems that Caligula did fully intend to hold a triumph. In the end, the British invasion was postponed. There had been no definitive victory, but neither had there been a major defeat. His German accomplishments did not technically qualify. Not that that would have been a serious obstacle for Caligula, but the celebration of a regular triumph for the modest achievements in Germany would have drawn attention to the fact that a major component of the campaign's purpose had not been fulfilled. Even though there had been no disaster in the north it would be difficult to present the campaign as a success. In the imperial period military failures were closely associated with the person of the emperor. He might try to unload responsibility on his legates, but when the emperor has taken personal command, that option is not readily available.⁸⁰ Caligula seems to have deemed it more politic to settle, he would hope only for the moment, for the much more modest mini-triumph, the ovation, to celebrate the victory over the conspirators. The decision to postpone the full triumph must have been his own, despite Suetonius' assertion that the senate cheated him of it. For all the charges of military bombast made against Caligula it is striking that none of his coinage contains any hint of claims of victory in Germany and Britain, unlike the coins of Claudius, which celebrate his victories in both.⁸¹ Caligula's decision not to celebrate his promised triumph in AD 40 has generally been passed over in silence by scholars, but it was surely significant. It can mean only that the projected invasion of Britain had been rescheduled, not cancelled, and that no triumph was to be celebrated until Caligula's total military programme in the north had been completed.⁸² Moreover, he almost certainly did not assume the title of Britannicus as some scholars maintain.⁸³ Dio does say that he was called Germanicus and Britannicus, but he also stresses that these titles were given as a jocular tribute (probably by the soldiers) to his great erotic conquests, as if he had 'possessed' the whole of Britain and Germany.⁸⁴

According to Suetonius Caligula intended to cap his stay in the north with a wild scheme, not reflected in any other source. Suetonius claims an even more serious rift between the emperor and his troops, and asserts that Caligula planned to eliminate those legions that had taken part in the mutinies of 14 and had behaved aggressively towards himself and his father. Although dissuaded from this mad enterprise, he supposedly would not give up his plan for a decimation of the legions (the ritual execution of every tenth man). On the point of carrying out the exercise, however, he noted signs that the troops might resist. He therefore fled the area and turned his ferocity on the senate instead.⁸⁵ The story, which is found only in Suetonius and is not hinted at in Dio or any other source, sounds like fantasy, and has all the hallmarks of Suetonian exaggeration: the first scheme would have

been all but impossible (there could have been few troops still serving from AD 14), and the second, typically, Caligula did not actually carry out, but was only, we are told, *planning* to carry out, the scheme (*consilium inuit*), and could be restrained from implementing it only with difficulty; nor is it clear where he would have found the troops to perform the task. These stories may well have had their origin in some grimly humorous comments he might himself have made to the soldiers, when it became clear that the legions had not made enough progress against the Germans to make the British campaign feasible in the spring of 40.

We do not know if Caligula returned by the longer route through Lugdunum after his ‘campaigns’ or if he proceeded directly to Rome, down the Rhine and across the Alps. At any rate the senate sent a second deputation, much larger than the one previously headed by Claudius, to offer congratulations. They brought with them the report of special honours and distinctions (possibly the offer of a triumph) and were received civilly. They also delivered obsequious requests from the senate that he hurry home. Caligula’s response could not have been comforting. He supposedly slapped his sword in its belt and declared loudly, ‘I’m on my way, and so is this.’ On his way back he issued a proclamation that he was returning only to those who wanted him, the equestrians and the people, but not to the senators, whom he could never again regard as fellow citizens. It may well be at this time that he made sardonic comments about eliminating the whole senatorial order.⁸⁶

Rome was clearly about to enter a particularly dark phase. As he left the north Caligula must have felt considerable disappointment. His dreams of great conquest and of emulating or even surpassing his ancestors had gone essentially unfulfilled. In his frustration he would have sought scapegoats, and have looked for some target for his anger. The senators were the obvious candidates. He had already shown his hostility towards them before his departure and his bitterness had clearly increased, not abated, during his months of absence. His return to Rome would test the senate’s loyalty even further, by demands that he be recognised in Rome not only as princeps, but as a princeps who had special divine attributes, and who was answerable to no one.

Notes

- 1 Tac. *Ann.* 2.41.4.
- 2 Assuming a roughly equal number of legionaries and auxiliaries, 200,000 men would necessitate some twenty legions! Velleius comments that the ten legions mustered at Siscia (modern Sisak) in Pannonia in AD 7 were the largest assemblage of troops since the civil wars (2.113.1).
- 3 Tac. *Ag.* 13.4, *Germ.* 37.5; Suet. *Cal.* 43.1, *Galb.* 6.3; Dio 59.21.1–2. Seneca (*Brev. Vit.* 18.5) speaks of Caligula trifling with the resources of the empire (*viribus imperi ludit*) but Seneca’s context makes it almost certain that his comment refers to the expenditure on the bridge at Baiae; Nagy 1981: 352 n. 84, 354 defends the lower of the figures.
- 4 Tac. *Hist.* 1.55; Ritterling 1924–5: 1759, 1800.
- 5 Ritterling 1924–5: 1244–9, 1758; see also Balsdon 1934a: 13–16; Syme and Collingwood 1934: 788–9. Wiedemann 1996: 228 suggests that the name of both of

- the legions, Primigenia, might have been intended to honour the birth of his daughter Drusilla.
- 6 *CIL* 10.4723.
 - 7 Suet. *Galb.* 6.3; Ritterling 1924–5: 1508, 1551, 1798 also suggests, on epigraphic grounds, that elements of IV Macedonica from Spain, and III Cyrenaica and XXII Deiotaurana from Egypt, may well have been concentrated on the Rhine in 39; Nagy 1981: 353 n. 85, 354 argues that two legions were initially summoned from Syria but did not arrive; military diploma: Dušanić 1978: 461–2.
 - 8 *CIL* 13.11853–6; Klumbach 1951: 165–6; Baatz 1962; Wells 1972: 146.
 - 9 Heising 2007: 212–13.
 - 10 Maurer 2013: 103.
 - 11 Maurer 2009: 1323–5.
 - 12 Jobst 1983: 35–40; Mosser 2005: 123.
 - 13 For surveys of this period, see Allen 1944: 1–46 (outdated but still very useful); Frere 1999: 31–34. Collis 1987: 526 observes that the late Iron Age kingdoms in Britain crossed tribal boundaries.
 - 14 Strabo 2.5.8, 4.5.3.
 - 15 Aug. *RG* 32 (the text is very uncertain); Frere 1999: 32.
 - 16 Tac. *Ann.* 2.24.5. Only one of these coins of Caratacus, found at Guildford, was known to Allen. Since then several others have come to light. On Caratacus' coins: see Boon 1973, 1974; Haselgrove 1987: 245; Cunliffe 2009: 147.
 - 17 White and Hawkes 1934: 49, Figure 5, no. 14.
 - 18 Caes. *Bell. Gall.* 4.20.
 - 19 Winterling 2011: 117 sees the planned campaign as an afterthought, adopted only after it was apparent that there would be no major victory in Germany.
 - 20 Philo *Leg.* 356; Suet. *Cal.* 19.3; Dio 59.21.1–2.
 - 21 Claudius would later assert, for similar strategic reasons, that his father Drusus had been able to launch his expedition against Germany because he was secure in the protection that a settled Gaul offered in his rear (*ILS* 212 [Smallwood 369]). Certainty in these matters is far from easy; Alston 2014: 146 takes the opposite view that he could not have been serious about invading Britain. But Claudius certainly saw it as a reasonable objective in 43.
 - 22 Despite his evident competence Galba had not won great military glory, nor did his family have a distinguished military pedigree; Malloch 2009: 504–5 observes that these features would have appealed to Caligula.
 - 23 Suet. *Galb.* 6, 7.1; Dio 60.8.7.
 - 24 Tac. *Ann.* 4.72–4; Suet. *Tib.* 41.
 - 25 Tac. *Ann.* 6.30.3.
 - 26 Nierhaus 1966: 182–98, 230–4.
 - 27 Suet. *Cal.* 44.1, *Galb.* 6.2–3. In the *Caligula* some of the measures are attributed by Suetonius to Caligula himself, presumably because they occurred during his reign, which is at variance with his claim in the *Galba* that Galba had perfected the troops' discipline before Caligula arrived. Dio 55.23.1 shows that the normal discharge fee was 12,000 sesterces. There is a problem in the text as transmitted, since the figure given in the manuscripts is 600,000. Brunt 1950: 68, n. 115 suggests that the discharge fee might apply only to the *primipili*, in which case the large figure as transmitted might be feasible; see Wardle 1994: 307.
 - 28 Suet. *Galb.* 6.3.
 - 29 Ritterling 1912; Schönberger 1969: 152–3; for a plan of the 'Caligulan' fort, see Ternes 1976: 865.
 - 30 Will 1987: 56–7 (see also Schumacher 1923: II. 42; Fabricius 1926: 584; Klose 1934: 55; Brogan 1935: 4).
 - 31 Tac. *Hist.* 4.15.2; Kolbe 1961: 104; Wortmann 1968: 323–9.

- 32 *AE* 1975: 633; the Valkenburg excavations: Glasbergen and Groeman-van Waateringe 1974; on the Caligulan date: Glasbergen 1972, 151–2; Horn 1987: 56; Campbell 2009: 9.
- 33 Lindsay 1993: 139–40; Wardle 1994: 298.
- 34 Ferrill 1991: 128.
- 35 Edmondson 1992: 175 suggests that Xiphilinus abbreviated Dio's account of the northern campaign to bring events in Britain close to those in Rome. The attempt to make some sense out of Dio's account presupposes that there is a rational basis to it. Ferrill 1991: 127–9 suggests that there is little point in trying to make sense of the actions of a madman.
- 36 This despite the fact that the account of the northern expedition is very detailed: Bérard 2007: 241.
- 37 Hurley 1993: 163; Woods 2012: 444–52.
- 38 Woods 2006–7: 131 argues that it was considerably later.
- 39 Roth 1999: 279.
- 40 Suet. *Cal.* 43; Willrich 1903: 306–7 notes that the sprinkling might have been done for the sake of speed.
- 41 Suet. *Cal.* 20. Jullian 1921: IV. 163 claims that the punishment was a revival of Gallic tradition. 'Speaking at Lyons' became a proverb for finding oneself in an uncomfortable position (Juv. *Sat.* 1.44). Fishwick 1978 suggests that the fate of the bad orators might reflect a local Celtic burial ritual.
- 42 Dio 59.22.4. Woods 2012: 452–4 sees *Sacerdos* as the source of an anecdote related by Suet. *Cal.* 32.3 that Caligula, while assisting during a ritual sacrifice, cut down the *cultarius* instead of the victim; Power 2015 argues that they are two separate incidents. Suetonius in an unspecified context (*Cal.* 30.1) speaks of a man who died instead of someone else because of confusion over his name, perhaps this same *Sacerdos*; see Faur 1973: 38.
- 43 Suet. *Cal.* 39.2; Dio 59.21.5–6.
- 44 Dio 59.24.1, 8.
- 45 Dio 59.23.2; Suet. *Aug.* 22; Gell. 5.6.21.
- 46 Fishwick 1978 suggests that the treatment of Claudius reflects a local burial rite of Celtic origin.
- 47 Suet. *Claud.* 9.1; Dio 59.23.1–5, *AE* 1980.638. The inscription is dated to his third tribunician year, thus between April 39 and April 40. The female figure is recorded as: ---]a [---]f. ('the daughter of [name missing]').
- 48 Suet. *Cal.* 17.1; Dio 59.24.2. The suffect consuls were Gaius Laecanius Bassus and Quintus Terentius Culleo; see Gallivan 1979: 67; Tortoriello 2004: 625.
- 49 Suet. *Cal.* 44.1; *Galb.* 6.3.
- 50 *AE* 1977.808.
- 51 Boschung 1987: 243–5.
- 52 See Campbell 1984: 40–41.
- 53 Saddington 2005: 198–9; Antiochus, a Parthian from Anazarbus in Cilicia, was an auxiliary in an *ala Parthorum* whose tombstone was found in Mainz (*AE* 1976, 495). He was an *evocatus*, a discharged soldier recalled to service, something very rare in the auxilia, and received triple pay, which seems to be unique. Saddington suggests that he may have served in 39 and have received the *corona exploratoria* (Suet. *Cal.* 45), which would provide a context for his distinctions.
- 54 Suet. *Cal.* 45.1–2, 51.2–3; Tac. *Hist.* 4.15.2 (*ludibrium*), *Ag.* 13.2 (*ingentes conatus*), *Germ.* 37.5 (*ludibrium* and *ingentes minae*); Dio 59.21.3, 22.2; 60.21.4; Eutropius 7.12; Orosius *adv. Pag.* 7.5.5; Balsdon 1934b: 79–81. Campbell 1984: 124 appears to accept the acclamations.
- 55 Suet. *Cal.* 45.2.
- 56 Livy 5.28.13; Tac. *Ag.* 18.6; Persius 6.43–4.

- 57 Suet. *Cal.* 45.3; Vesp. 2.3; Koula: *ILS* 8791.
- 58 Suet. *Cal.* 44–7; Dio 59.21.3; see also Aurelius Victor *De Caes.* 3, 11–12.
- 59 Suet. *Cal.* 46; Dio 59.25.1–3; for a useful summary, Dobesch 2007; the closeness of the accounts of Suetonius and Dio here suggest a common source, identified by Momigliano 1932b as Cluvius Rufus.
- 60 Gelzer 1918b: 405–6 (united Britons); Balsdon 1934b: 92 (soldier's refusal), essentially followed by, for instance, Phillips 1970: 369–74; Wardle 1994: 313 (he rejects it in Wardle 2007: 118, n. 3); Wiedemann 1996: 228; Todd 1999: 45 (mutiny a possibility); Salway 2001: 52 ('poor state of military discipline'); Adams 2007: 251, n. 720 (a 'possibility'); Winterling 2011: 118. Malloch 2001b: 551 notes the danger of using speculation not supported by any source evidence as the basis of a general explanation. Balsdon 1934: 32 offers the alternative suggestion of confusion with the term *musculi*, used of sappers' huts (Vegetius 4.16), which the troops would have been instructed to collect before departure; Woods 2000 suggests that Suetonius' *conchae* is an expression for boats; Aalders 1959: 15 more intriguingly suggests that the *conchae* represent female private parts; Hind 2003 and Gury 2008 see references to pearls, and Gury suggests that a misunderstood Celtic ritual may lie behind the accounts; Flory 1988: 500–2 argues that the shells are a sarcastic allusion to the pearls dedicated in a cuirass to Venus Genetrix by Julius Caesar. Aurelius Victor *De Caes.* 3, 11–12 places the shells incident in a planned invasion of Germany and adds the exotic details of Caligula dressing in the robes of Venus.
- 61 Adams 2007: 249 suggests that Caligula turned his thoughts to an invasion of Britain only after the campaigns in Germany had proved generally ineffective. If so, he would have been playing a very dangerous game.
- 62 Verg. *Aen.* 1.207; Suet. *Cal.* 45.2.
- 63 Tac. *Ag.* 13.2.
- 64 Suet. *Cal.* 51.3; Dio 60.8.7.
- 65 *Caes.* BG 5.8; see Dessau 1924–30: 2.1.125.
- 66 Suet. *Cal.* 49.1, 54.2; Vegetius 4.39. Observation and non-observation of the restriction: Saint-Denis 1947; Rougé 1952: 316–19; Beresford 2012.
- 67 Suet. *Cal.* 46.
- 68 Davies 1966 (training); Bicknell 1968 (Canninefates).
- 69 Suet. *Cal.* 44.2.
- 70 Suet. *Cal.* 44.2. Allen 1976: 96–100; Nash 1982: 111–14. Nash points out the close affinity of some types of Cunobelinus with those of Amminius, and suggests that the style on the two rulers' coins is so close as to suggest the work of the same engraver. Henig and Nash 1982: 243–6 established the correct spelling of the name, which is found also on an inscription from Chichester (*RIB* 90).
- 71 *RIB* 90: on the dedicatory inscription, Lucullus identifies himself as *Ammini filius*; Henig and Nash 1982: 244–5; Magilton 2013: 90–92.
- 72 Orosius 7.5.5. Scullard 1982: 286, in his widely influential book on the late republic and early empire, simply states as a fact that Adminius met Caligula on the coast; Malloch 2001b discounts this information of Orosius, which he argues draws on Suetonius, and adheres to Suetonius' chronological scheme as he interprets it (see also Wardle 1994: 309). He thus has Adminius submitting to Caligula in Germany in 39, and sees Caligula's visit to the Channel in more purely symbolic terms. But he is in agreement that this submission of Adminius is the key to much of Caligula's apparently erratic behaviour. The chronology of these events is so confused in the sources that certainty is impossible; it is a matter of weighing Suetonius' putative chronology against Orosius' definitive statement, and in reality, neither source, in this particular matter, inspires much faith. Given the problems of communication at this period, the logistics of Adminius travelling from Britain to Germany in the winter so as to coincide with Caligula's stay in Germany might have been difficult and if

- Malloch's basic sequence is correct it is perhaps more likely that Adminius would have headed for Lugdunum (Nony 1986: 345 places the meeting 'lors de son séjour lyonnais'). Wilkinson 2005: 47 proposes a compromise, that Adminius defected to Caligula while he was on the Rhine, and the official ceremonial surrender took place later on the Channel. *Mutatis mutandis*, the essential points raised here apply whether Adminius actually defected in 39 or 40.
- 73 Tac. *Ag.* 13.2; moreover, in the imaginary speech that Dio 62.4.1 places in the mouth of Boudicca some twenty years later, Caligula's scheme of invading Britain is placed in the same category as that of Augustus, abandoned because of fear.
- 74 Suet. *Cal.* 46; Dio 59.25.3. This is the first record of the amount paid to troops on campaign since Augustus' Spanish campaigns; see Campbell 1984: 166; Wardle 1994: 315.
- 75 Dio 59.25.2 speaks of a single trireme, Suet. *Cal.* 47 refers to them in the plural, and says that they were taken partly overland.
- 76 Plin. *NH* 3.119 records that Claudius embarked in a huge ship from Ravenna as part of his British triumph; on the centrality of the theme of Oceanus, see Braund 1996: 91–6.
- 77 Willrich 1903: 313.
- 78 Suet. *Aug.* 29.2; *Cal.* 44.2.
- 79 Suet. *Cal.* 47.1: the captives are described by a Greek word *axiothriambeuton* ('worthy of a triumph'), which Woods 2007b suggests was based on a play on the name of the Gallic tribe, the *Atrebat*s; Domitian: Tac. *Ag.* 39.1.
- 80 Failure associated with the emperor: Cheung 1998; blaming the legate: Wardle 2011.
- 81 See Brackmann 2005; *RIC*² 32, which depicts Caligula addressing soldiers, doubtless praetorians, is clearly unrelated to the German campaign, having been issued at the outset of his reign. Claudius' coins show victory arches with the legends *de Britannis* (*RIC*² 1.3–34, 44–45, 122) or *de Germanis* (*RIC*² 1.3, 35, 71–74, 126).
- 82 Pers. *Sat.* 6.4–7; Suet. *Cal.* 47, 48.2.
- 83 See, for example, Willrich 1903: 313; Gelzer 1918b: 406; Anderson and Furneaux 1922: xiv, n. 3; Balsdon 1934b: 88; Bicknell 1962: 73.
- 84 Dio 59.25.5a uses the term *cheiro*, which presumably translated the Latin *subigo*. The word has a *double entendre*, as in the bawdy song about Julius Caesar recorded by Suetonius, which begins 'Caesar "possessed" Gaul, Nicomedes "possessed" Caesar...' (Suet. *Jul.* 49.4).
- 85 Suet. *Cal.* 48.1–2.
- 86 Sen. *Ira* 3.19.2; Suet. *Cal.* 49.1–2; Dio 59.23.6, 25.5. An inscription (*ILS* 192) from Praeneste of uncertain date records a dedication to Fortuna Primigenia *pro salut(e) C. Caesaris Aug(usti) Germ(anici) et reditu*, perhaps with reference to the northern expedition.

DIVINE HONOURS

Of all the manifestations of wild and extravagant behaviour exhibited by Caligula during his brief reign, nothing has better served to confirm the popular notion of his insanity than his apparent demand to be recognised as a god. Cruelty and incompetence may be unattractive traits of a ruthless despot, but they do not in themselves prove mental instability. A claim to divinity, however, seems inseparable from madness. The evidence for the supposed cult of Caligula in Rome is characteristically confused and incomplete, and must be evaluated with perhaps even more than the usual caution and scepticism. Most importantly, however, we must be careful not to impose on the ancient world our own preconceptions of what constitutes a sound and healthy relationship between the human and the divine.

Among the Romans, as among many people of antiquity, the distinction between man and god was not a sharp one. While this blurring is usually associated with the phenomenon of emperor worship in the imperial age, its origins go back to the republic. Thus Cicero could record his gratitude to Publius Lentulus by calling him *parens ac deus* ('parent and god'), and Mucius Scaevola could say to Crassus *te in dicendo semper putavi deum* ('I have always thought you a god when you speak'). It was thus well within the bounds of Roman tradition for Scribonius Largus to refer to Claudius as *deus noster Caesar* ('our god Caesar').¹ In the Roman mind such expressions conveyed a recognition not so much of a divine being but of divine qualities that we normally associate with a god, but may in exceptional cases reside in fellow humans. In the eastern provinces especially, but by no means exclusively, this fine line was easily crossed. Many of the eastern peoples had long been accustomed to honouring their rulers with the tokens of divinity and to identifying them during their lifetimes quite explicitly as gods made manifest on earth. When Roman officials replaced these rulers, they in turn became the objects of worship. Thus, after Titus Flamininus defeated Philip of Macedon and proclaimed the liberation of Greece he began to receive homage from cities throughout the region, as did many Roman generals after him.² Even Cicero had temples decreed for him in Asia, which he refused.³

The Roman emperor became the natural focus for such adoration, and Augustus was obliged to accommodate somehow those communities of the Greek

east who expressed a desire to worship him during his lifetime. At the formal provincial level his official policy seems to have been to allow worship of himself only in conjunction with Rome, a practice that was transported to the west; the famous altar at Lyons, for instance, was dedicated to both Rome and Augustus.⁴ At the local level, however, he was not nearly so scrupulous, and cults of the emperor himself are found throughout the eastern communities, while members of the imperial family travelling in the east regularly received divine honours.⁵ This policy of restraint at the official level was maintained, as would be expected, by Tiberius. Thus he refused a temple to himself and Livia in Baetica in Spain in 25. He also declined the offer of divine honours from Gytheum (the seaport of Sparta), suggesting that more modest tokens of respect would not be out of place.⁶ He did, however, allow a temple at Smyrna to himself, Livia and the senate. Again, he seems to have turned a blind eye to local manifestations of worship: Germanicus refused divine honours offered by the inhabitants of Alexandria, but judged them appropriate if made to Tiberius and Livia.⁷

In Italy it is clear that Augustus was worshipped during his lifetime at the municipal level. There are inscriptional references throughout Italy of temples, priesthoods, festivals and games in his honour. There is evidence of a temple at Puteoli, a temple and sacred games at Naples, and different grades of priest – a *sacerdos* at Pompeii, and a *flamen* at Pisa, Verona and Praeneste.⁸ Even in Rome there seems to have been a popular notion, reflected in the Roman poets, that the emperor should be equated with, if not exactly identified with, the gods.⁹ Nevertheless Rome stood apart from the rest of the empire in this matter. In the city itself there was an aversion to the overt and official worship of a living man as a god. Whether this sprang from profound theological considerations is difficult to say – it may have more to do with traditional Roman virtues of moderation and sobriety (*gravitas*). During an emperor's lifetime there might be private or unauthorised worship in Rome, which seems to have gone unchecked, but there could be no official or state worship. Thus when Agrippa completed the Pantheon in 25 BC and wished to consecrate it as a temple to Augustus, the princeps refused his request, and even Nero much later refused to allow a temple proposed to his divinity. Dio claims that generally speaking no emperor had been worshipped in Rome and Italy up to his own time, although he seems to have ignored the municipal cults.¹⁰

At the official level in Rome there were several ways of dealing with the popular impulse to look upon the princeps as a god. One option was to postpone apotheosis until after death, as happened in the cases of Caesar and of Augustus. Another way of dealing with the issue was to allow the emperor in a sense to be worshipped while still alive, but indirectly. Every individual Roman possessed a *genius*, a spirit with its own divine qualities, to which prayers and offerings could properly be made. In 30 BC, among the honours voted after the Battle of Actium the senate passed a decree that a libation should be poured to Octavian's *genius* at every public and private banquet, and we see from Augustan poetry that these libations became associated with the ones poured to the household Lares, the

gods of the hearth.¹¹ At some point between 12 and 7 BC the worship of the emperor's *genius* was elevated to a more formal level, as part of the rearrangement of the municipal system of Rome. Romans had long worshipped the Lares, not only in private homes, but also at the crossroads (*compita*), in the form of the Lares Compitales. During the republic their shrines had fallen into disuse; in the Augustan reorganisation, statues of Augustus' *genius* were set up between those of the Lares, which were known from then on as the *Lares Augusti*. Several altars of the reorganised cult have survived, showing the sacrifice of victims, pigs for the Lares and bulls for the emperor.¹² The worship of the emperor's *genius* comes very close indeed to the direct worship of the emperor himself. Intimately linked with the worship of the *genius* of the emperor is the veneration of his *numen*. Basically, *numen* signifies a power that can reside in any thing or person, but tends to be associated with the power of a god, and by natural linguistic development had by the Augustan age become virtually synonymous with 'god'. To worship the *numen* of Augustus was in a sense to worship the divine property that reposed within him, without crossing the line completely and acknowledging him as divine, although it is far from certain that the unsophisticated were aware of the distinction. In literature the *numen* and the *genius* of the emperor seem to be used interchangeably, although strictly speaking they are different.¹³ Probably in AD 6, when Augustus was still very much alive, Tiberius dedicated the altar of the Numen Augusti at some location in Rome, in association with the abstract personification of Felicitas.¹⁴ Our main information on the actual form of worship of the *numen* is, however, provided from outside Rome. In AD 11 a municipal altar was dedicated to the Numen Augusti in the forum of the city of Narbo (modern Narbonne) in Gaul. A board of three knights and three freedmen was established to offer incense, wine and sacrificial victims to the emperor's *numen* on his birthday and on other significant anniversaries.¹⁵

It is against this background that Caligula's claim to divinity must be evaluated. In the east he was, of course, identified as a god from the outset. Thus when the league of the Greek states sent an embassy to Rome to offer him congratulations they could quite naturally refer to him as the *neos theos sebastos* ('the new god Augustus'), while a decree of Cyzicus in Asia Minor refers to him as *ho Helios neos* ('the new sun').¹⁶ These manifestations are completely within the tradition of the Greek east and could only have been spontaneous, since there would hardly have been time for Rome to send instructions on the form of worship required.¹⁷ There are two particularly striking illustrations of Caligula's policy towards his cult in the east, his planned temple at Miletus and his threat to convert the temple in Jerusalem to his own worship. According to Philo the decision to dedicate the temple to Caligula in the guise of Zeus Epiphanes was taken in the middle of 40.¹⁸ While the move seemed to Philo, as a Jew, the acme of lunacy, from a Roman point of view it can be regarded at worst as a major political and diplomatic blunder; in quasi-theological terms it merely represents the extension, albeit foolish and insensitive, of a practice that had long operated in the east, where there were already numerous dedications to Augustus as Zeus. At most, the departure from

the norm lies in Caligula's demanding, as opposed to merely acquiescing in, worship in his own right, unassociated with 'Rome' or 'the senate' or the like. This demand, however, seems to have been in response to aggressive activities by the Jews at Jamnia, and it thus may have had more of a political than a religious intent.¹⁹ The details of this famous incident are set out in [Chapter 10](#), but it is worth pointing out here that in the end Caligula was apparently persuaded to abandon his plan.

The fullest picture of the organisation of Caligula's cult in a specific province comes from the ancient city of Miletus, located on the west coast of Asia near the mouth of the Maeander River. Miletus had made at least one previous attempt to be associated with the imperial cult. Tacitus reports the competition in AD 26 between cities of Asia to be the centre for a provincial temple of Tiberius (along with Livia and the senate). The award went to Smyrna, narrowly beating Sardis. One of the arguments against Miletus was that the city was already preoccupied with the worship of Apollo.²⁰ Dio reveals that Caligula ordered that a *temenos* (sacred enclosure) was to be set aside there for his worship, and given his passion for the grand and the grandiose, it may well have been the very connection to Apollo that led to Miletus being selected, through its association with one of the great architectural wonders of the ancient world.²¹ The discovery of an important inscription relating to Caligula's cult shows that its centre was not to be in Miletus proper, but rather at Didyma, not a separate city, but located within the territory of the Milesians, about ten miles south of the city proper.²² The inscription was found near the south-west corner of the most famous building of antiquity, the great Temple of Apollo. The original structure was destroyed by the Persians, under Darius, in 494 BC, according to Herodotus; by Xerxes in 479, according to Pausanias; and a replacement was begun after a visit of Alexander the Great.²³ The reconstruction may well have continued under Caligula, but it was still not yet completed when Pausanias wrote his description of the site in the second century, and the excavated ruins suggest that it probably remained incomplete. The temple was in the Ionic order with a frontal colonnade of ten columns. The cult statue was a seated figure of Apollo, situated in a small, roofed Ionic temple at the rear of the cella. Strabo calls it the largest temple in the world, and it is not difficult to understand why it might have appealed to Caligula.²⁴

Caligula's Milesian cult breaks with tradition in an important respect. Of the other major temples in Asia, that at Pergamum was to Augustus and Roma, that at Smyrna, as noted, was to Tiberius, Livia and the senate. The imperial cult at Miletus was reserved for Caligula alone, although closely associated with Apollo. The precise nature of that association is uncertain. Caligula may have intended to occupy part of the site at Didyma alongside Apollo's great building. He may also have intended to be generous to his new neighbour – in the list of Caligula's admirable achievements, Suetonius notes his intention to complete the temple of Didymaeon Apollo. But Dio attributes to him a more sinister scheme, to 'appropriate for his own use the splendid temple that the Milesians were building to Apollo'.²⁵ Dio's claim has to be treated with some caution,

but in light of what was envisaged in Jerusalem it is by no means implausible. It had a precedent of sorts in the scheme of certain eastern client kings who contributed funds to complete the temple planned for Zeus in Athens and to dedicate it to Augustus' *genius*.²⁶

The question of whether Caligula incorporated Apollo's temple for his own worship must remain open.²⁷ A coin issued by Miletus depicting Caligula on the obverse and a temple on the reverse is generally taken to represent his temple.²⁸ The building on the coin is hexastyle (six frontal columns) rather than decastyle (ten), which has been taken to show that Caligula did not make use of the Temple of Apollo, although the difference could be explained as a compromise by the engraver working in a limited field. But in fact it seems unlikely that the coin depicts Caligula's temple at all. The same reverse type recurs frequently under later emperors for many years after Caligula's death, and presumably represents either Apollo's temple, or the inner shrine that held the god's cult statue. Thus the coin almost certainly has no bearing on the question of whether or not Caligula appropriated the Temple of Apollo.

The inscription found at Didyma commemorates the dedication by officials of a cult statue of Caligula, presumably erected in the *temenos* mentioned by Dio.²⁹ The inscription is of considerable interest, providing unique information on how, in the case of Caligula, the institution of the imperial cult was organised at the provincial level.³⁰ The first official to be mentioned is the *archiereus*, a chief priest, as in every major branch of the imperial cult. He is Vergilius Capito, an individual of some stature, since he is known from the reign of Claudius as Prefect of Egypt.³¹ At the time of the inscription he is recorded as the high priest for the third time of a sanctuary of the provincial cult in Asi; but for the first time at Miletus, this term is almost certainly not used in contrast to Didyma but for the whole territory of Miletus as distinct from the province of Asia.³² The second official listed is the *neokoros*, Tiberius Julius Menogenes. The *neokoros* is the temple warden, responsible for keeping the building clean and pure. He is also, it seems, high priest for a second time, probably earlier for one of the cult centres of Asia or a municipal cult of Miletus.³³ The third individual named is Protomachus from the city of Julia. He has three titles. The meanings of the first two, *sebasteneos* and *sebastologos*, which are not attested elsewhere, are unclear; the third, *archinepoios*, involved supervision of the officials who tended to the fabric and expenses of the temple. The names of thirteen officials (*neopoioi*) are appended, delegates, according to Robert, of the province of Asia, each one representing a city: Julia (Julia Gordus in Lydia or Julia by the Caÿster), Miletus, Pergamum, Antiocheia on Maeander, Cyzicus, Apamea, Laodicea, Caesareia (Tralles?), Adramyttium, Philomelium, Halicarnassus, Smyrna, Sardis. They are described as *philosebastoi* ('devotees of the Augustus'), at one time thought to describe their function but probably an honorific title. Robert suggested that the cities were centres of *dioikeseis* (whose primary purpose was the dispensing of justice).³⁴ The fact that the *neopoioi* come from thirteen different cities suggests a temple built at provincial expense, like those at Pergamum under Augustus and at Smyrna under Tiberius.³⁵

So much for the eastern empire. In Rome and Italy Caligula's formal religious policy was in some respects fairly conservative. He assumed the office of pontifex maximus (senior priest) at an early stage of his reign. When at the beginning of 39 the oath was taken in the senate he pedantically prevented the Flamen Dialis (priest of Jupiter) from participating in it, as it had always been considered sacrilegious for that particular priest to swear any oath. At Nemi, south-east of Rome, he revived a tradition that had fallen into disuse. The priest of Diana, by tradition a runaway slave, would remain in office until a challenger came along and slew him. The usurper would make his challenge by plucking a bough from a tree in the sacred grove, a tradition made famous through Frazer's *Golden Bough*.³⁶ The practice had long been neglected. In Caligula's reign the incumbent was elderly, and the emperor is said by Suetonius to have found a contender for the position. The neglect of Suetonius to mention any physical attack suggests that the violent takeover was essentially ritual.³⁷ As pontifex maximus, Caligula seems also to have undertaken the reorganisation of the Salii, the priests of Mars. This is shown by a fragment preserving a list of the members of the college found on the Aventine at the beginning of this century. Five names appear there, in two sections. In the second the appointment of Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, in 40, is recorded. The four names in the preceding section, Cornelius Dolabella, Marcus Asinius Marcellus, Decimus Torquatus Silanus and Lucius Iunius Silanus (this last restoration is especially dubious) were clearly all appointed together in a single year; that year is missing from the inscription but is earlier than 40. Mommsen argues plausibly that Tiberius had neglected to fill vacancies to the college while on Capri and that at least four had accumulated to be filled by the beginning of Caligula's reign.³⁸

At the outset of his reign Caligula behaved in religious matters, as in all else, with great decorum. He is said by Dio to have prohibited images (*eikones*) of himself and also to have requested that a decree ordering sacrifices to his *genius* be annulled, and perhaps recognising that posterity could be ungenerous, he asked that his gesture be inscribed on a tablet.³⁹ All of this was eventually to change. We are told later of a dramatic reversal of the practices of Augustus and Tiberius in Rome itself, where, it is claimed, temples were erected to Caligula and sacrifices offered to him as a god.⁴⁰ This would, of course, represent a significant development, going far beyond the spontaneous and popular tendency for the emperor to be perceived in divine terms.⁴¹ Dio seems to date the establishment of a formal cult to mid-40, the first manifestation being Caligula's anger, on returning from the north, over the senate's failure to vote him *ta hyper anthropon* (literally, 'things above a human').⁴² His supposed rivalry with Neptune at the time of the bridge at Baiae should probably be seen as braggadocio rather than as evidence of a cult.

The claim that Caligula demanded divine status in Rome must be scrutinised very closely. As an indication of the emperor's madness Philo provides a lengthy description of his practice of impersonating different gods. He supposedly started with the demi-gods, Dionysus, Hercules, Castor and Pollux, changing costume to fit the character. As he grew more mad he progressed to the major

gods, beginning with Hermes, then Apollo, complete with radiate crown, while choirs sang hymns of praise. Then he would take up weapons as Mars. Dio also speaks of these impersonations, and includes such female deities as Juno, Venus or Diana. There may be a basis of truth to these accounts, but while they tell us much about Caligula's possible penchant for transvestism, they say almost nothing about any claim to divinity. Caligula undeniably had a predilection for dressing up, as Alexander, as a triumphator, even as a woman.⁴³ To dress up as a god was a natural progression. Suetonius mentions his dressing up as gods or goddesses in the general context, not of his religious ideas, but of his exotic costumes, and Dio notes that dressing up as Jupiter was simply a front, as a way of getting women into bed. Such behaviour was not unique to Caligula. Suetonius reports a dinner party held by Augustus, when all the guests appeared dressed as gods and goddesses, Augustus being made up to represent Apollo.⁴⁴ It proved to be a public relations nightmare, and Antony made much use of it in his propaganda. But his complaint focused on an imagined breach of taste and propriety, not on any serious claim to divinity. That is surely how such behaviour should be regarded also in Caligula's case. In any event, it seems that Caligula may not have expected these performances to be taken too seriously. He is said by Suetonius to have stood beside a statue of Jupiter and to have asked the actor Apelles which of the two was greater. When Apelles hesitated Caligula is said to have had him flayed (almost certainly a confused account of a joke on Apelles' name, see [Chapter 14](#)). Significantly, however, Suetonius lists this behaviour not among his religious eccentricities but as one of his pranks, *inter varios iocos*. Dio reports that on another occasion Caligula stood on a high platform uttering oracles. A Gallic shoemaker who saw him was moved to laughter, and when asked by Caligula 'What do you think I am?', was courageous enough to reply with something on the lines of, 'an idiot!'. Being someone of humble rank he came to no harm.⁴⁵ It is clear that there was a tradition that Caligula took the impersonations more lightly than did Philo or Dio.⁴⁶

The evidence for an official cult of Caligula in Rome is provided essentially by Suetonius and Dio. We are told by Suetonius that the emperor established a temple to his *numen*. Dio speaks of a temple on the Capitoline voted and paid for by the senate, thus associated with an official cult. This was to be served by a priesthood, for which the richest competed and paid considerable amounts. Dio notes that Caesonia and Claudius, among other prominent persons, became members, and in return for the honour Caligula received from each of them an enormous sum, put by Dio at ten million sesterces. In order to meet his obligation Claudius was required to pledge his estates for security, and, when he could not pay his debts, was forced into bankruptcy.⁴⁷ The institution of this priesthood seems to have been inspired by the Augustales, a body who served the worship of Augustus. In at least one respect it was different, and indeed different from all other priestly colleges. While senators who were priests could be called upon to contribute to the games given by the colleges on special occasions, there is no evidence of a *summa honoraria* (sum paid on entry into an office) for the colleges in Rome. There

is one known example in the case of a municipal priesthood in Italy, an apparent payment of a modest 5,000 sesterces for a flamine at Lanuvium.⁴⁸

The evidence for the actual site of Caligula's supposed temple in Rome is much confused. Dio even seems to indicate that there could have been two of them, but his claim is supported by no other source. The first, he suggests, was established on the Capitoline, by the vote of the senate. He then states that Caligula built a *katalusis* ('lodge') on the Capitoline to dwell with Jupiter, but decided to build a second temple, at his own expense, on the Palatine. Suetonius speaks of only one temple, to the emperor's *numen*, but he does not specify the actual location. He does, however, allude to foundations of a new *home* begun on the Capitoline, where Caligula had reputedly decided to live with Jupiter, and to his plan to build a bridge from the Palatine over to the Capitol.⁴⁹ It is probable that there was only one temple at most, and most modern scholars believe that it was on the Palatine, where a shrine to Augustus had been built after his death.⁵⁰ It was said that Caligula planned initially to have Pheidias' famous statue of Zeus at Olympia transferred to the Palatine as a cult image, but when practical difficulties arose he had a new one of himself made. Suetonius adds that the statue was life-size and made of gold, dressed up each day in different clothing.⁵¹

What form did this cult take? Dio reports that Caligula styled himself Jupiter Latiaris, an ancient cult figure first worshipped on the Alban Mount. Suetonius claims that he would stand between the statues of Castor and Pollux in their temple in the forum to be worshipped, and that there were some who greeted him as Jupiter Latiaris.⁵² It is difficult to know precisely what this implies; it may be that he used the temple as a vestibule to his residence and may have enjoyed striking a pose as guests entered.⁵³ There is a possibility, however, that Caligula had his statue placed in their *cella*. The tradition of a ruler having his statue among those of the gods, not as a cult statue, strictly speaking, but as an offering to the gods, was common throughout the empire, as was pointed out to the Jewish embassy from Alexandria (Chapter 10). But it was also well established in Rome. Cicero speaks of Julius Caesar's being placed in the Temple of Quirinus. Tiberius made a point of insisting that if his own statues were to be placed in the temples they should be among the *ornamenta aedium* ('the adornments of the temple'), rather than among the gods, suggesting that this latter arrangement was not generally considered inappropriate.⁵⁴ Caligula did not exhibit Tiberius' restraint, but he may not have been the only one to yield to temptation. In 54, for instance, the senate voted Nero a number of honours, including a statue, or statues, in the temple of Mars Ultor, to be the same size as the cult statue of the god, suggesting that Nero's would stand next to it in the *cella*. Moreover, the representation of emperors in the guise of Jupiter was part of the imperial propaganda from Augustus on.⁵⁵ Suetonius does not seem in this context to speak of official worship – he talks of 'some' (*quidam*) greeting him as Jupiter, which speaks against universal practice and suggests either a popular or a casual reaction, or even the response of obsequious courtiers. Also the charge that someone had represented himself as Jupiter would have been a handy form of political abuse. Clodius, for instance, asserted that Cicero called

himself Jupiter and claimed that Minerva was his sister.⁵⁶ One further piece of evidence sometimes brought up in this context is that one of the titles acquired by Caligula, according to Suetonius, was *optimus maximus Caesar* ('best and greatest Caesar'). It has been claimed that this shows that he was worshipped in the guise of Jupiter Optimus Maximus.⁵⁷ But while the formula may associate the emperor with the attributes of the god it certainly does not identify him as such. The expression *optimus maximus princeps* may well appear in fragmentary inscriptions as early as the Augustan period, and it can certainly be confirmed for Nero, who in fact refused divine worship in Rome.⁵⁸ That Seneca did not find its application to a human offensive is shown by his observation to Nero that the princeps should be considered the greatest, *maximus*, by virtue of being the best, *optimus*.⁵⁹

The overall testimony of Suetonius and Dio is difficult to evaluate. The information is vivid and detailed, and it is not easy to dismiss the broad picture they present, even if allowance is made for distortions of some of the details. Yet their accounts present serious difficulties. We are not able to interrogate Caligula to determine what his egregious behaviour and statements imported, although it is interesting that when he left the amphitheatre in fury at receiving less applause than the gladiator Porius, in the angry statement attributed to him by Suetonius, Caligula drew a clear distinction between the deified emperors and himself.⁶⁰ Most significantly, however, the picture presented by Suetonius and Dio is emphatically contradicted by the material evidence. In the first place there is not the slightest hint in a single inscription of the cult of Caligula in Rome or in any western province. An undated dedication, for instance, from a freedman at Bourges in Aquitania to a local god Etnosus (presumably Etussus) and the emperor, where we might have expected divine attributes, alludes to him simply as C. Caesar Germanicus. At least one inscription, on a milestone from Santiago de Compostela in Spain, can be dated to Caligula's fourth tribunician year, thus no earlier than March/April 40, and, again, it contains no divine attributes. An inscription recorded at Coimbra, dated after his third consulship (January 40 at the earliest) seems to describe him only as Caesar, without further attributes.⁶¹ An interesting pair of inscriptions has survived from Narbonese Gaul. Each records a dedication to Tiberius and Caligula by a Sextus Aelianus Pisinus. The dedicator is identified as a *sevir Augustalis*, a member of the priestly college charged with organising the worship of Augustus and, thus, presumably attuned to the issue of the imperial cult. The inscription to Caligula is securely dated to 40 and yet, again, gives no indication of any cult or worship.⁶² The Arval record, which is extant for 39 and almost certainly for part of 40, gives no hint of any claim of divine status, even though, in the next reign, Claudius, while still alive, is described by the Arvals as a *divinus princeps*.⁶³ Also, while his father Germanicus is identified on inscriptions in the east as Zeus/Jupiter, there is no known inscription identifying Caligula with this particular god.⁶⁴

The emperor could not, of course, play a direct personal role in determining detailed information contained in inscriptions at a local level, where official policy might not be reflected accurately. Also, it is probably the case that a western

inscription bearing divine attributes would have been a likely candidate for destruction after the emperor's death. But it is still remarkable that not a single one has survived. Moreover, these reservations do not apply to evidence provided by Caligula's official coinage.⁶⁵ Neither in their types nor in their legends do the coins even hint at a formal cult. Especially significant here is the absence of any example of the radiate crown in the official coinage.⁶⁶ This device is borrowed from the worship of the sun god by the Kings of Egypt and of Syria, and is used on the gold coins of Ptolemy III of Egypt and Antiochus VI of Syria.⁶⁷ In Rome it is the distinctive attribute of the deified emperor, and found on the coins bearing the head of Divus Augustus minted by Tiberius, Caligula and Claudius.⁶⁸ Even though he specifically refused a temple in Rome, Nero allowed himself to be depicted radiate on the reverse of precious metal coins and the obverse of lower denominations.⁶⁹ Caligula was, in fact, highly progressive in the types of his official coinage. It is striking that no new type marked the presumed establishment of his cult, and remarkable that he did not, at the very least, like Nero, depict his own head with the radiate crown. As is true also in inscriptions, Jupiter is absent from the official coins of Caligula, despite the important role he supposedly played in the emperor's life. The only divinities depicted on Caligula's coinage are Vesta, on a widely distributed as, and Neptune on the as he issued in honour of Marcus Agrippa, distinguished as a naval commander. One might add to these the abstraction of Pietas on the reverse of one of his sesterces.⁷⁰ Coins and inscriptions are not, of course, repositories of unblemished truth, they can be just as biased and distorted in their message as the literary sources. But what they do convey without prejudice is how a regime wanted the world to see it, and the emphatic and unequivocal message of the material evidence is that Caligula had no desire for the world to identify him as a god, even if, like most people, he enjoyed being treated like one. This is compelling testimony that must surely trump the colourful accounts of the literary sources.

It is also significant that the two contemporary (and hostile) literary sources, Seneca and Philo, make no explicit allusion to a formal cult of Caligula in Rome. Philo, who takes it as a sign of Caligula's madness that he demanded worship as a god, makes no reference to an official cult in the city. Although this is an argument from silence, it is a persuasive one. Philo was devastated by Caligula's plan to be worshipped as Zeus in Jerusalem; it would be astonishing for him to omit to draw a parallel with the situation in Rome, especially since he happened to be in the city at the very time the cult was said to be established there. Interestingly enough, he does not even include Jupiter among the gods supposedly impersonated by Caligula. In the works of Seneca, who had a highly *personal* antipathy towards Caligula, not shared by Philo, there is only one passage that some scholars have suggested contains an allusion to a cult. In describing the execution of the philosopher Julius Canus, Seneca reports how, on the way to his death, he came close to the tumulus on which a daily sacrifice was offered to *Caesari deo nostro* ('our God Caesar'). There is no way, however, of telling if the 'Caesar' here refers to Julius Caesar, Augustus or Caligula, and, if the last, it

seems difficult to imagine that Seneca could have intended such an expression to be taken seriously. Several centuries ago Julius Lipsius argued that this passage was meant as a piece of bitter irony, and that the ‘sacrificial victims’ were in fact opponents who had been put to death by Caligula.⁷¹ Pliny, who may well have met Caligula and who is generally scornful about him, and happy to dwell on his excesses and eccentricities, says nothing about any claim to divinity in his extant *Naturalis Historia*, published in AD 77, when many of its readers would be old enough to remember Caligula.

One aspect of Caligula’s reign that has contributed to the confusion over the issue of his cult is the introduction into Rome of the ritual of obeisance known as *proskynesis*. This had been practised in the presence of the kings of Assyria, and in Assyrian documents there are frequent references to subjects prostrating themselves and kissing the king’s feet. It was followed also in the Persian court of the Achemenids. Its function seems initially to have been little more than a social formality, the greeting appropriate to one higher in rank, but when adopted in Greece it was chiefly a form of worship.⁷² Only in extreme cases would a Roman prostrate himself. Lucullus is recorded as falling to his knees before Julius Caesar, and Quintus Haterius threw himself at Tiberius’ knees, accidentally causing the emperor to fall flat on his face in the process.⁷³ At the outset of his reign Caligula showed such personal modesty that he forbade Romans from giving him even a formal greeting when he went out in public. It was later in his reign that *proskynesis* became common, and it was apparently introduced by the notoriously obsequious Lucius Vitellius. After his successful peace with Parthia, Vitellius was summoned home, supposedly falling under the general suspicion that Caligula felt towards successful military commanders (Chapter 6). He apparently knew how to save himself. He fell at the emperor’s feet with tears and lamentations, calling him divine names and vowing that if he were allowed to live he would offer sacrifices to him.⁷⁴

Vitellius’ gesture is the only one cited from Caligula’s reign that seems to have any connection with actual worship. Dio mentions that Caligula was in the habit of extending his foot (or his hand) in order to avoid kissing those who greeted him. He met with the required response not only from humble people, but also from those who considered themselves to be in high repute.⁷⁵ When Dio goes on to say that these things happened ‘as though to a god’ he seems to suggest not so much worship as god-like treatment. Several specific instances (apart from Vitellius) are known from Caligula’s reign. Domitius Afer supposedly prostrated himself as a suppliant, when overwhelmed by Caligula’s superior talent as an orator. The Prefects of the guard, and the freedman Callistus, on being accused by Caligula of plotting against him, prostrated themselves and denied any such evil intent. Seneca says that Caligula offered his foot to the suppliant senator Pompeius Pennus to kiss, thus seeking to introduce Persian tyranny.⁷⁶ All these instances imply not veneration but rather servile flattery. This is surely confirmed by the fact that even when the Jews of Philo’s embassy came into Caligula’s presence they bowed to the floor in reverence. The senatorial embassy sent to Claudius after the

assassination fell to their knees in his presence, clearly not in recognition of his divinity. Claudius banned such practice after his accession.⁷⁷

Perhaps the most interesting example of *proskynesis* occurred when Caligula was absent in the north. We are told that the senators went in a body to the Capitol to perform sacrifices and to do homage to Caligula's throne set up in the temple. In Rome the gods had thrones, carried in processions and used at banquets, and taken to the theatre with symbols such as thunderbolts placed on them. Dio reports that a golden chair was granted Julius Caesar, and was similarly carried into the theatre. Dio also records, under the year AD 30, that men brought gilded chairs into the theatres in honour of Sejanus and Tiberius, at a time when Tiberius, at least, was absent in Capri.⁷⁸ But these are not strict precedents. The incident in AD 40 occurs in the context of procedural problems caused by the absence of the emperor from Rome and the death of the consul designate immediately before the new year. The senators paid homage to the chair not so much as an act of worship but to maintain some sort of fiction that Caligula was still presiding in Rome. This is indicated by Dio's report that they left money behind as though they were giving it to the emperor. The closest parallel to homage *in absentia* is reported by Servius, the fourth century commentator on Vergil. He observes that when Romulus was acting in an official capacity he would set up an empty curule chair next to himself, with the sceptre and crown of Remus, to indicate their common rule. In 40, Roman officials were afraid to act independently, and they similarly behaved as though Caligula was somehow present.⁷⁹

Was there, then, an official cult of Caligula at Rome, despite the striking absence of epigraphic or numismatic evidence?⁸⁰ The possibility cannot, of course, be ruled out, but even if there was such a cult it would reflect a breach of tradition and protocol rather than a manifestation of madness. It may, in any case, be possible to reconcile in some degree the testimony of Dio and Suetonius with the silence of the epigraphic and numismatic record. One suggestion is that Caligula sought only to associate himself, rather than identify himself, with Jupiter, to convey the idea that he was that god's 'divinely appointed viceregent', and that his intent was distorted by the hostile sources.⁸¹ But there is another possible explanation. It is to be noted that Suetonius reports that Caligula established his temple to his *numen*. Now this could simply mean *numen* in the sense of 'godhead'.⁸² But it is also possible that Suetonius reflects a tradition in which the temple to Caligula was dedicated not to himself personally but to his *genius* (or perhaps to his *numen*, *genius* and *numen* being almost interchangeable in this type of context by Suetonius' day). There is a hint of this in the satirist Persius, who humorously declares that among the festivities prepared in Rome for the triumphal return of Caligula from Germany he will put on a gladiatorial show involving a hundred pairs of contestants *dis...genioque ducis* ('for the gods and to the *genius* of the emperor').⁸³

The worship of the emperor's *genius* in Rome would not in itself be remarkable. Where Caligula may have crossed the line could have been in moving the worship from the private to the public sphere. In Rome the *genius* of the emperor had been worshipped privately before Caligula. It had no temple of its own, nor did it

have its own priesthood, and even in the Italian municipalities it was only sparsely attested.⁸⁴ It could be that in Caligula's case worship of his *genius* in Rome was elevated to the level of an official state cult, with a temple and body of priests to serve it. It had probably been difficult in the best of circumstances for many people to draw, at a non-intellectual level, the distinction between worship of the divine element within the emperor and of the emperor himself. If this cult was now elevated to the level of a state institution, with the trappings associated with the regular gods, the confusion would be even further compounded, a confusion that a hostile tradition would have cheerfully exploited. If Caligula's innovation was limited to the worship of his *genius*, there is no reason to expect that it would be reflected on coins or inscriptions.⁸⁵

Whatever the precise form of the worship of Caligula, whether of his *genius/numen* or even of himself, it is clear that he did not *impose* it on the Romans. There is only one hint of opposition in the sources. Suetonius claims that Caligula punished people who would not swear by his *genius*. Swearing by the *genius* of the emperor had by this time become routine, and Suetonius' testimony might suggest that in Caligula's case it was seen by some to constitute a new form of worship.⁸⁶ Generally, however, there seems to have been no reluctance to accommodate Caligula's wishes. Dio does specify that it was people connected with the stage who set up images to Caligula and Drusilla, but in another context he concedes that the honours paid to him as a god came not only from the mob, used to flattery, but from people of repute.⁸⁷ The sources show that Vitellius and other obsequious courtiers fell over themselves in addressing Caligula in terms appropriate to a divine figure.⁸⁸ And it was by a decree in the senate that a temple was supposedly formally dedicated to his cult. Caligula might have encouraged, or at least not discouraged, this behaviour, unlike Augustus or Tiberius or even Nero in similar circumstances, but the total absence of numismatic or inscriptional evidence make it highly unlikely that he actually demanded to be recognised as a god.

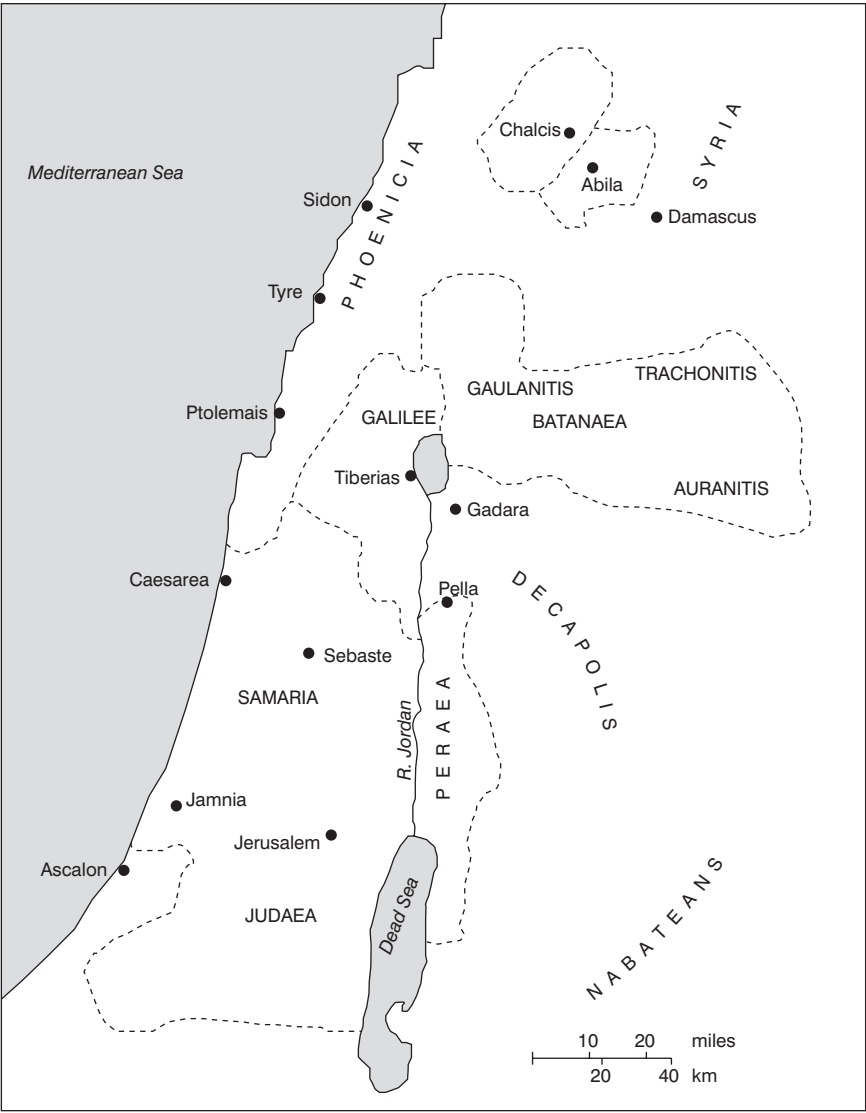
Notes

- 1 Cic. *Sen. red.* 8, *Orat.* 1.106; Scrib. Larg. *Comp.* 60.
- 2 Ross Taylor 1931: 35–8; Weinstock 1971: 289; Price 1984: 40–47; Fishwick 1987: 46–51.
- 3 Cic. *Q.Fr.* 1.1.26.
- 4 Tac. *Ann.* 4.37.1; Suet. *Aug.* 52; Dio 51.20.6.
- 5 Simpson 1997 argues that Augustus was not as restrained in seeking divine honours as is generally assumed.
- 6 Tac. *Ann.* 4.37–8; *SEG* 11.922 (*EJ* 102).
- 7 *EJ* 320b.
- 8 The evidence is collected in Ross Taylor 1920; 1931: 214–23, who suggests that only the emperor's *genius* was worshipped in Italy; see also Taeger 1960: 142–5; on this see Fishwick 1987: 91 n. 55.
- 9 Ward 1933: 203–12.
- 10 Tac. *Ann.* 15.74.3–4; Dio 51.20.8, 53.27.3.
- 11 Dio 51.19.7; see Hor. *Ode* 4.5.31.

- 12 *CIL* VI. 454; Ovid *Fast.* 5.143–6; Suet. *Aug.* 30.1; Taylor 1931; Cerfaux and Tondriau 1956: 318; Hano 1986; Fishwick 1987: 84–5.
- 13 See Fishwick 1969: 356–67; 1987: 375–87 on the two concepts.
- 14 The event is based on the restoration of the *Fasti Praenestini*; see A. Degrassi, *Inscr. Ital.* XIII.2.115; on the date, see Alföldi 1978: 417.
- 15 *ILS* 112. Public dedications for the delivery of Rome from the conspiracy of Sejanus, one from Interamna, the other from Crete, were made to Tiberius' *numen* (*ILS* 157, 158).
- 16 *IGR* 4.145.3 (Smallwood 401); *SIG³* 799.9; his father was similarly called the 'new god' at Mytilene (*IGR* 4.75).
- 17 Aalders 1960: 242–3 assumed that Caligula adopted the cult name of Helios.
- 18 Simpson 1981b suggests that since the temple was not actually dedicated, Philo may have done no more than speculate about the name.
- 19 Taylor 1931: 270–7; Ward 1933: 203–4; Taeger 1960: 186; Weinstock 1971: 304.
- 20 Tac. *Ann.* 4.54–55.
- 21 Dio 59.28.1.
- 22 Wiegand 1911: 65–6, against the scholarly consensus insisted that Caligula's temple was located in Miletus proper. There is no archaeological evidence for such a structure in Miletus.
- 23 Herod. 6.19.3; Paus. 8.46.3.
- 24 Vit. 7 (*praef.*) 16; Strabo 14.1.5; Paus. 7.5.4. A brief description of the site is provided by Bean 1966: 231–42.
- 25 Suet. *Cal.* 21; Dio 59.28.1. Haussoullier 1899 seems to have been the first modern scholar to enunciate the idea that Caligula intended to take over Apollo's temple.
- 26 Suet. *Aug.* 60.
- 27 Wiegand 1911: 65–6 argues that Dio's statement that Caligula wanted to take over the Didyma Temple was probably just a rumour, perhaps originating from a gift that he made towards its construction.
- 28 *RPC* 2707; Haussoullier 1899: 161; Price 1984: 257 (hesitantly).
- 29 Herrmann 1989: 195.
- 30 *AE* 1912.134 (Smallwood 127).
- 31 Capito was Prefect of Egypt by early 49 (*IGR* 1.1262 [Smallwood 382]).
- 32 Robert 1949: 208, n. 4.
- 33 Robert 1949: 209.
- 34 Robert 1949: 226–7.
- 35 Magie 1950: 1367 rejects Robert's argument that the temple was built by the province, and observes that no *koinon* of the province is known to have been held in the city before Hadrian (*IGR* 4.780).
- 36 On this see Frazer 1890: 1.1–43; Bernardi 1953: 278; Gatti 1980; Pascal 1976: 27, 33–4; Wardle 1994: 271–2; Green 1999–2000.
- 37 Livy 31.50.9; Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 44; Gell. 10.15; Suet. *Cal.* 35.3; Dio 59.13.1. Bernardi 1953: 279 sees Caligula reviving old religious practices on the Augustan model.
- 38 *ILS* 9339; see Mommsen 1903: 125–9. *PIR²* C 1346 distinguishes the Dolabella in the list from the Dolabella who was partner of Afer in the prosecution of Quinctilius Varus (Tac. *Ann.* 4.66.2).
- 39 Dio 59.4.4. Nock 1930: 3 claims that an *eikon*, while intended to honour an individual, was not the object of a cult.
- 40 Suet. *Cal.* 22; Dio 59.4.4; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 39.4.
- 41 Gury 2003 argues for an even more dramatic break with tradition, suggesting that Caligula assumed the role of alchemist and 'magician'.
- 42 Dio 59.25.5.
- 43 Gods: Philo *Leg.* 75–114; Dio 59.26.6; Alexander: Dio 59.17.3; triumphator: Suet. *Cal.* 52; woman: Jos. *AJ* 19.30; Dio 59.26.8; Sudas.

- 44 Suet. *Aug.* 70; *Cal.* 52; Dio 59.26.
- 45 Suet. *Cal.* 33; Dio 59.26.9: *mega paralerema*. The noun is unparalleled in Classical Greek; Lampe 1961 gives a meaning of ‘nonsense’ and cites one post-classical usage in a spurious passage of John of Damascus (*passio Artemii* 28), but the verb *paralero* is found in Arist. *Fr.* 594, *Kn.* 531 where it seems to mean ‘to talk drivel’. Woods 2012: 454–9 suggests that Apelles was seen as partly responsible for the delay in completing the statue for the Temple in Jerusalem and was punished for that.
- 46 Bellemore 1994 suggests that Caligula was an avid pantomime performer, and would need to dress up in various guises.
- 47 Suet. *Cal.* 22.3, *Claud.* 9.2; Dio 59.28.5. Suetonius puts Claudius’ payment at eight million.
- 48 Mommsen 1887–8: 352; Duncan-Jones 1982: 150; Talbert 1984: 60.
- 49 Suet. *Cal.* 22.4; Dio 59.28.2–4.
- 50 Pliny *NH* 12.94; Suet. *Aug.* 5.1; Dio 56.46.3. Willrich 1903: 445; Gelzer 1918b: 410; Balsdon 1934b: 163 argue for the Palatine; Eitrem 1932: 54; Gag   1968: 73, n. 110 for the Capitol.
- 51 Jos. *AJ* 19.8; Suet. *Cal.* 22.2–3, 57.1; Dio 59.28.3–4.
- 52 Suet. *Cal.* 22.2; Dio 59.28.5. Jos. *AJ* 19.4 says that Caligula called Jupiter Capitolinus his brother. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 3.10 reports that Caligula supported his claim to be Jupiter on the basis of his own incestuous birth.
- 53 Gury 1999: 266 sees it as an aspect of Caligula’s progress to absolutism in the Egyptian manner. He notes that Apelles painted Alexander between the Dioscuri (Plin. *NH* 35.93).
- 54 See Pollini 2012: 390.
- 55 Cic. *ad Att.* 12.45; Suet. *Tib.* 26.1; Jos. *BJ* 2.194; Tac. *Ann.* 13.8.1; Niemeyer 1968: 36; Pek  ry 1980; Fishwick 1987: 78.
- 56 Cic. *Dom.* 92. Gatti 1980b: 172–3 associates his supposed plan to move his capital to the Latin town of Antium with his supposed worship as Jupiter Latiaris.
- 57 Suet. *Cal.* 22.1. Quint. 1.7.21 says that there is a tradition that *optimus maximus* appears in an inscription of Caligula for the first time with the new spelling of ‘i’ for ‘u’ as found in the archaic spelling *optumus maxumus*.
- 58 Frei-Stolba 1969: 28.
- 59 Sen. *Clem.* 1.19.9.
- 60 Suet. *Cal.* 35.2.
- 61 Bourges: *ILS* 4675; Santiago: *CIL* II.6233–4, see *AE* 1952.112; Coimbra: *CIL* II. 4639.
- 62 Esp  randieu 1929: 88, 89.
- 63 *AFI* 22.8,4 (Smallwood 14.8, 24).
- 64 *IG* 12.1392–4 (Thera) Zeus Boulaios. It might be added that a number of inscriptions even in the east, dated to 40/1, do not include divine attributes: *IGR* 1.1086 (Alexandria), end of 40; *IGR* 1.1248 (Foakhir Valley, Egypt), 40/1; *IGR* 4.1615 (Philadelphia, Asia), September 40. Dio 59.28.8 claims that Caligula was called ‘Zeus/Jupiter’ in documents but does not elaborate either on their character or their source.
- 65 See also Fears 1981: 72; Pollini 2012: 381.
- 66 The recent discovery of a radiate crown on a throned figure on a dupondius usually assigned to Caligula is not relevant, since the figure almost certainly represents Augustus; on this, see Levy 1988. Caligula’s radiate head does, of course, appear in local coinage: Magnesia ad Sipylum in Lydia: *RPC* 2454; Aezani, Phrygia: *RPC* 3085, 3086.
- 67 See Head 1911: Antiochus 766, Figure 337; Ptolemy 853, Figure 378.
- 68 Tiberius *RIC*² 1. 49, 70–83, 91–93; Caligula *RIC*² 1. 1–4, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, 23, 24, 31, 60–62; Claudius *RIC*² 1.101.

- 69 Nero *RIC*² 1. 44–47, 56, 57, 112, 114–116, 119, 121, 123, 124, 184, 186, 187, 189–191, 193–207, 209, 211, 215, 218, 284, 286, 288, 289, 291, 293, 295, 296, 337–339, 341, 343, 344, 346, 362–365, 373–379. For a summary of the other supposed divine attributes on Nero's coinage, see Fears 1977: 325–8.
- 70 Vesta: *RIC*² 1.38; Neptune *RIC*² 1.58; Pietas: *RIC*² 1² 111.
- 71 Sen. *Tranq.* 14.9; see Lipsius 1605: 165, 282. Scholars generally agree with Lipsius, e.g. Willrich 1903: 447, Balsdon 1934: 172, Latte 1960: 316, n. 1. Pippidi 1939: 79–86, however, insists that no irony was intended, and Herzog-Hauser 1924: 834 even suggests on the basis of Seneca's text that Caligula's cult name was *Caesar Deus Noster*.
- 72 Pritchard 1955: 275; Alföldi 1970: 64.
- 73 Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.7; Suet. *Jul.* 20.4.
- 74 Suet. *Vit.* 2.5; Dio 59.27.4–6.
- 75 Dio 59.27.1. Alföldi 1934: 39 points out that Dio is obviously thinking of senators.
- 76 Domitius: Dio 59.19.5; Callistus: Dio 59.25.8 (Patricius' epitome); Pompeius: Sen. *Ben.* 2.12.1–2 who reflects a rare favourable tradition about Caligula, that in extending his foot he was not trying to be insolent but showing off his pearl-studded slippers.
- 77 Jos. *AJ* 19.234; Philo *Leg.* 352; Dio 60.5.4. The distinction is between *proskynein* and *prospiptein* (see Gatti 1980: 165).
- 78 Dio 59.24.4; Caesar: Dio 44.6.1–3; Tiberius and Sejanus: Dio 58.4.4.
- 79 Serv. on *Aen.* 1.276.
- 80 For a useful summary of the question: Wardle 1994: 205–8.
- 81 Fears 1981: 72–4.
- 82 This is the sense that it seems to have at Suet. *Cal.* 24.2; see Levi 1963: 119–20; Aiardi 1978: 100.
- 83 Pers. *Sat.* 6.48–9.
- 84 Fishwick 1987: 91, n. 55.
- 85 Fishwick 1990: 270; Simpson 1997: 108; Wilkinson 2005: 28; Pollini 2012: 329–30.
- 86 Suet. *Cal.* 27.3. In the *Satyricon* it is recorded that the slave Mithridates was crucified *quia Gai nostri genio male dixerat* (Pet. *Sat.* 53). Böhmer 1996: 119–20 notes that previous emperors were relaxed about refusals to swear by his genius; see Wardle 1994: 249.
- 87 Dio 59.24.7, 27.2.
- 88 Suet. *Vit.* 2.5 singles out Vitellius as the first to worship Caligula as a god.



Map 4 The Central Levant

CALIGULA AND THE JEWS

The calamities that Jews suffered during the reign of Vespasian and at various times under later emperors have created a popular impression that Jews and Romans were traditionally sworn enemies. But it was not in fact until Caligula's reign that relations between the two underwent a serious crisis. The difficulties that arose were complex, and not properly understood. They involved two different branches of Judaism. There were, on the one hand, those Jews who had continued to live in the original region of Jewish settlement, loosely referred to as Judea, with its main centre in Jerusalem. There were also, presenting a different set of social and religious problems, the Jews of the diaspora, whose situation arose from their expulsion from Judea and exile in Babylon in the sixth century BC, and the subsequent creation of large Jewish communities in Mesopotamia. There had been various periods of emigration since, marked most notably by the influx of Jews into Egypt after the time of Alexander. By the reign of Caligula, the diaspora Jews were scattered among the various provinces of the empire, as well as in Rome and Italy.

Although there had been occasional earlier contacts, it was in the mid-first century BC, and Pompey's eastern campaigns, that Romans began to deal with Jews as an identifiable national group. After Pompey's death Herod the Great was favoured and with Rome's blessing seized the throne of Judea, which he ruled as a client kingdom (it became a Roman province in AD 6). In dealing with the descendants of Herod, Caligula could make a fair claim to competent governance. A fairly large realm was bestowed on Herod's grandson and Caligula's friend, Agrippa, in AD 37. Herod's son, Herod Antipas, the boyhood friend of Tiberius, did not fare so well; he was exiled and the tetrarchy he had previously governed was also handed over to Herod Agrippa (on these events, see later in this chapter). The problems presented by the Jewish people as a whole proved much more intractable. Many of the communities of diasporic Jews, of course, had come within the Roman orbit before the time of Herod and his family. Generally, the main problem that arose was the ill will, not between Jew and Roman, but between the various Jewish communities and their often hostile neighbours. The rigidity of the Jewish faith tended to create local friction and unpopularity,

since contrary to the general trend of Greco-Roman religions, they refused to recognise the validity of any god other than their own. This was not, of course, of primary concern to their Roman rulers. While Romans considered Judaism a superstition, they did not regard it as a political threat and were prepared to tolerate it, and even to protect Jewish rights. To the extent that there was anti-Jewish sentiment among the Romans before Caligula, it generally took the form of fairly good-natured ridicule of what were considered their outlandish religious views, 'mockery rather than malignancy', as Gruen phrases it.¹ Admittedly, when Germanicus made his distribution of grain in Alexandria, Jews were not allowed to share in it, but that was because they were not citizens, and Josephus is at pains to stress that it was not a provocative exclusion.² Philo speaks of Sejanus' hatred of the Jews and his plan to attack them throughout the empire. But there is only one serious measure taken against the Jews recorded in Tiberius' reign. Suetonius, Josephus and Tacitus tell of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, and the use of 4,000 Jewish men of military age who were forcibly conscripted to go to Sardinia to fight brigands.³ Only Josephus mentions a reason – financial corruption among individual Jews, involving Romans close to Tiberius, and Smallwood suggests that proselytism from the ranks of the Roman upper classes may have caused problems. The expulsion seems to have been restricted to Rome and is mentioned by all three sources in the context of actions against the worship of Isis; Suetonius adds the banishment of astrologers. Thus it does not seem to have been a specifically narrow anti-Jewish action as such.⁴

Serious animosity towards the Jews was thus not a prejudice of the Romans. It was manifested more typically by Greeks, and its most severe manifestations seem to have been in the great Egyptian city of Alexandria. The association between the Jews and Egypt was a very ancient one, going back to the second millennium and the period of the captivity, and there had been a sizeable Jewish community there since at least the early sixth century BC. The arrival of the Ptolemies and the foundation of Alexandria, with its enormous commercial potential, encouraged extensive Jewish immigration from the third century on. The Jews seem to have enjoyed the goodwill of the Ptolemaic rulers, and were especially prominent in the army, being established in garrisons throughout the country. Josephus even claims that Ptolemy VI Philometer gave two Jewish generals, Onias and Dositheus, command over his whole army.⁵ This apparent favour may account for the undercurrent of hostility noticeable in Alexandrian literature from as early as the third century BC. The annexation of Egypt after the Battle of Actium aggravated the tension. The Jews for their part probably welcomed the arrival of the Romans, and the protection that it promised. Indeed, after the conquest, Augustus erected in Alexandria a bronze stele to announce the safeguarding of Jewish political and religious rights.⁶ The Greeks, on the other hand, were resentful.

Events in Alexandria during Caligula's reign occur against a background of one of the most controversial scholarly issues in the history of the Jewish diaspora, their civic status within Alexandria. There is no clear scholarly consensus on this complex topic. Josephus claims that from the outset Jews in Alexandria

were granted by Alexander the same favoured status as that enjoyed by the Macedonians.⁷ He also asserts that Augustus did not weaken any of the privileges that Jews had enjoyed since that time.⁸ But Jews living in the city at the time of the Roman conquest do not appear to have held Alexandrian citizenship as a community, although some may have managed to acquire it as individuals. There was instead a distinct Jewish entity, *politeia*, which seems to have been both religious and political, and Jewish political rights were separate from the rights of the Alexandrian Greeks.⁹ Aulus Avilius Flaccus, Prefect of Egypt under Tiberius and initially under Caligula, reportedly admitted that he treated the Jews as people with no rights, although they did in fact have rights and had the status of 'settlers', clearly something less than citizenship.¹⁰ And Claudius' decree (see below), guaranteeing Jewish privileges, inherently implies something less than, or at least different from, regular citizenship. It seems that in place of full citizenship Jews of Alexandria belonged to their own independent citizen body, with their own leader, or ethnarch (until that position was eliminated by Augustus), their own *gerousia* (council of elders), their own assembly, and even their own courts for dealing with cases that involved only Jewish law. They were thus able to enjoy the benefits of civic life without being forced to become part of the gentile community. This did not prevent them from calling themselves Alexandrians, which it seems they frequently did.¹¹ This already confusing situation is made more complicated by the attempts of individual Jews to acquire Alexandrian citizenship, although broadly speaking there is no evidence that Jews generally were restive under their putative subordinate status or that the Jews as a community actually sought full citizen rights in Alexandria, a prospect that seems to have caused the Greeks so much alarm.

After the conquest of Egypt by Augustus, the province was subject to a poll tax, a *laographia* ('register of the people').¹² Alexandrian Greeks were exempt from it; native Egyptians were not; it is generally assumed that Jews were in the same category as the Egyptians, but the situation is far from clear. A famous papyrus, *CPJ* II.150, in which Alexandrian Greeks assure the princeps (possibly Claudius, but the identity is uncertain) that they will ensure provincial revenues by preventing others from acquiring exemption, is thought to apply to Jews, but there is no certainty that this is the case. Similarly, another papyrus, *CPJ* II.156c, of the Claudian period, has the Greek nationalists apparently asserting at a hearing in Rome that the Jewish status is that of those who pay the tax. But it is countered by Herod Agrippa, that the tax was not in fact imposed on the Jews.¹³

The main problem in understanding precisely what happened in Alexandria during Caligula's reign is not lack of information. By ancient standards the topic is extremely well documented. But our main source for events is Philo. As useful as he is, as a participant in, and recorder of, the events, it must always be borne in mind that he had his own particular agenda as a spokesman for his people, and would not have felt the modern historian's obligations to objectivity. He has left behind two narratives of the period, the *In Flaccum*, an attack upon Aulus Avilius Flaccus, the governor of Egypt at the time, in which Flaccus personally bears the

brunt of the blame, and an untitled work generally referred to as the *Legatio*, the account of an embassy of Alexandrian Jews, including Philo himself, to Caligula, where the blame is now placed more broadly at Caligula's door. There is also some relevant papyrological material but it is so fragmentary and decontextualised that the essence of the information it contains is all but impenetrable.

Flaccus was Prefect of Egypt when Caligula came to power. Born and educated in Rome, he was well-known to members of the imperial house and considered among Tiberius' closest friends. Appointed to succeed Hiberus in Egypt in AD 32, Flaccus handled his responsibilities ably and conscientiously during his early years of office, and affairs in the province seem to have run smoothly. In particular, he sought to curb the activities of the extremists, even forcing the rabid Greek nationalist Isidorus to leave the city. But things seemed to start going wrong shortly after Caligula's accession. Flaccus seems to have felt exposed and under considerable psychological strain. He had apparently played some role in the banishing of Agrippina, Caligula's mother, although to balance that disadvantage he is also said to have been a friend of Macro.¹⁴ Preoccupation with his future may, according to Philo, have caused him to lose his grip on affairs, and in Philo's lurid account he seems to have sunk into deep depression.¹⁵ It may well be that an opportunity was sensed by the Greeks; these would have included Isidorus, now back home, who was supposedly able to persuade Flaccus that he and his compatriots could be useful allies. What form the protection could have taken we do not know, but Isidorus may have played a part in Macro's downfall, probably in early 38 (see [Chapter 5](#)), and if Flaccus had been involved in some compromising association with Macro, the hold over him, probably much exaggerated by Philo in any case, may have been in the form of blackmail, rather than of benign protection. Flaccus should have been wary of any dealings with the notorious Isidorus, a man he had previously banished after being caught out by the Prefect in a variety of intrigues, but he may have had little choice in 38. If we are to believe Philo, Flaccus' anti-Jewish behaviour revealed itself very early in the reign, when news of Caligula's accession reached Alexandria. The Jews asked him to forward a declaration of goodwill to the new emperor, and the Prefect simply sat on the document.¹⁶

As Philo saw the situation, Flaccus now began to show a distinct partiality towards the Greeks in lawsuits and the like.¹⁷ But whatever role he had played in the political manoeuvrings that preceded Caligula's accession, there are no signs that Caligula as emperor bore him a serious grudge. He was allowed to remain in office until 38, when he was due to be replaced by Macro, and on the death of the latter his prefecture seems to have been extended (see below). The spark that ignited what may already have been a tense situation was in fact the arrival of Herod Agrippa in Alexandria in August 38. At the urging of Caligula he had abandoned his plans of returning home by the northern route through Greece, and had waited until the summer for the Etesian winds, travelling first from Puteoli to Alexandria on one of the fast grain ships.¹⁸ On Agrippa's arrival the Jews apparently discovered that Flaccus had not forwarded their declaration

of loyalty to Caligula and asked Agrippa to communicate it through his own personal agents. This was done, and as they waited for a reply, Agrippa, with his ostentatious entourage, seems to have provoked the Greeks by his very presence, which the Greeks perhaps read as an overt message that the Jews enjoyed the protection of a friend of the emperor.¹⁹ But they felt no deference towards him – they remembered him as just another defaulting debtor. They collected in the Gymnasium to deliver insults against Agrippa, staging a parody of his presence in the city, with a local idiot impersonating him in the character of King Carabas ('cabbage'). More seriously the mob set about erecting statues in the synagogue. Agrippa had by now disappeared from the scene. Perhaps he realised that his presence would bring the Jews more danger than protection, and opted to slip away unobtrusively to his kingdom.

Flaccus' response to the violation of the synagogues was to declare Jews foreigners and aliens, according to Philo's account, which must surely be highly selective.²⁰ As reported, Flaccus' action seems to have been the signal for the Greeks to launch into a campaign of violence, as Jews looked in vain for help from the Prefect, who appears to have resented Agrippa's earlier interference. Alexandria had long been divided into five quarters, each named after a letter of the Greek alphabet.²¹ Philo reports that Jews generally lived in two of them, but they had spread to others. He asserts that they were now all driven in to a small part of one of them. The overcrowding in this confined single area caused serious problems. People were forced to live rough on the beaches and even in the cemeteries. They lost many of their possessions, some of which were looted by the Greeks, and the terrible living conditions inevitably led to the spread of disease.²² Even allowing for exaggeration in Philo's account, the Greeks seem to have behaved with unchecked savagery when they caught those Jews who had strayed outside in their search for help. Jews were set upon by the mobs, who haunted the edge of the ghetto for their victims and, according to Philo, beat them or burned them to death, or, perhaps worst of all, bound them together and dragged them through the market, kicking and trampling them until their bodies were mutilated beyond recognition.²³

There has recently been a fundamentally new and stimulating approach to the whole issue of the problems of the Jews in Alexandria that explains the events in more narrowly topographical rather than political or ethnic terms. Gambetti has argued that the basic outline of events in the *In Flaccum* is sound but that Philo has massaged the facts to suit his own agenda. In particular she notes his claim that in 38 Jews were forced into a small area of the city. Strabo is cited by Josephus as saying that the Jews had a considerable section of the city assigned to them, governed by a genarch, as if it was an autonomous entity.²⁴ Technically, permanent Jewish residence seems to have been legal in only one zone. From 38, it is argued, the law was to be strictly obeyed, and the Jews were obliged to reside only in the single Delta section. Gambetti suggests that while Jews in Alexandria did indeed have their own *politeia* and that it did give them exemption from the poll tax, this privilege applied only to those Jews resident in their own quarter. Jews outside this quarter thus lost their legal status and did not enjoy their regular

privileges. This became a bone of contention and Gambetti argues that well before the death of Tiberius, rival Greek and Jewish deputations were sent to Rome to determine territorial and civic status (she bases the existence of this hearing in large part on her reading of a very fragmentary papyrus *PFale* 107, usually dated later). She assumes that the issue dragged on in Rome until Caligula's accession, and was then decided in favour of the Greeks, and that instructions were then sent to Flaccus to implement the decision and act against those Jews who did not have legal residence. Jews unable to establish a legal connection with the official Jewish settlement would be ranked as foreigners, hence the reference in Philo to Flaccus classing Jews as aliens (*epelydas*), outside the laws and liable to be deprived of their property, or even put to death without legal consequences.²⁵ In fact the instructions may have been conveyed to Flaccus via Herod Agrippa. In this scenario Flaccus would have had little choice in the perceived anti-Jewish measures that he undertook.

Philo, hardly surprisingly, presents a one-sided picture. He offers no hint that the Jews took any kind of retaliatory action whatsoever, but the subsequent conduct of Flaccus (and the attitude demonstrated later by Claudius) suggests otherwise. Flaccus arrested members of the Jewish council and implemented a search of Jewish houses for weapons. At the end of August, on Caligula's birthday, arrested Jews were marched through the streets to the theatre where they were beaten and forced to eat pork. Finally an uneasy calm seems to have settled over the city. The Jews placed their hope in the central government in Rome, and prepared a resolution to be forwarded to Rome, essentially a shorted recapitulation of the one they had earlier sent through Agrippa.²⁶

Little more is known of the situation in Alexandria until October 38. Events then took an unexpected turn, when a detachment of troops under the command of a centurion, Bassus, arrived to arrest Flaccus. He would be taken to Rome, where his supposed Greek allies seem to have turned against him and he was exiled, later executed (see [Chapter 6](#)).²⁷ He was replaced as Prefect by Gaius Vitrasius Pollio, who stayed in Egypt for the remainder of Caligula's reign, possibly dying there in 41. Pollio seems to have been a competent administrator, and the situation became much calmer. The Jews were at some point allowed to return to their old quarters and to resume their former livelihoods. Certainly, by September or October 39, about a year later, they were sufficiently wealthy to contribute towards a large-scale sacrifice for Caligula's campaign in Germany.²⁸

In Philo's *In Flaccum* the Prefect is clearly the villain of the piece. In his *Legatio* Philo widens his indictment to include Caligula. He can find no smoking gun; the problem is seen more broadly as the emperor's assumed detestation of the Jews being known to the Greeks and inspiring them into venting their hatred.²⁹ But Philo offers no proof of this and it can be argued that Caligula's generous treatment of Herod Agrippa and his arrest of Flaccus, and his generally facetious rather than malevolent attitude in meeting the later Jewish delegation (see below), belie the general charge of anti-Jewish prejudice, which is not an issue in the *In Flaccum*. Flaccus himself must bear much of the responsibility, but his conduct in

his last months in office is difficult to explain, since it stands in so much contrast to his several earlier years of service. Latent anti-Jewish feeling among the Alexandrian Greeks, either from religious intolerance or opposition to what was perceived as encroachment on civic rights, or a combination of the two, must certainly be a significant factor. The Greeks could not help feeling aggrieved that their proud and independent kingdom, with its illustrious capital of Alexandria, had come to an end, to be replaced by the domination of foreigners.³⁰ There was a permanent undercurrent of hostility towards the alien ruler, and while in the main it expressed itself in merely passive contempt, there also grew up a great tradition of Alexandrian martyrdom, hallowing the memory of those who died in active opposition to the Romans. This could not fail to make the Jews targets also. As Bell observed, anti-Jewish feeling grew among the Greeks because it offered a 'safer and less direct way of attacking the authority of Rome'.³¹ But even this does not seem to explain the intensity of feeling, or the control of the streets that the opponents of the Jews seemed to command, and recent scholarship has begun very plausibly to place more emphasis on the third element in the Alexandrian population, the native Egyptian.³² If Jews had in some sense an inferior status within the city, their situation was measurably better than that of the Egyptian. Throughout his *In Flaccum*, for all his aspersions on the Greeks, Philo does at times ascribe anti-Jewish activities specifically to Egyptians, talking of the inborn malice of the Egyptians and their innate enmity of the Jews, and in the *Legatio* he speaks of the Greeks exploiting the Egyptian hatred of the Jews to create chaos in the city. Josephus seems to confirm this, speaking of Egyptian antipathy towards the Jews.³³ Hence blaming the Greeks for the woes suffered by the Alexandrian Jews at this time may well be an oversimplification.

The new Prefect decided that the status of the Jews should be determined by the emperor, and delegates were sent to Rome to present both the Greek and the Jewish arguments. Philo led the Jewish delegation, the notorious anti-semitic writer Apion, as well as Isidorus and Lampo, forming part of the Greek team.³⁴ The chronology of the embassies' arrival in Rome is greatly confused. Philo indicates that the Jewish group sailed in 'mid-winter', but does not specify the year, and scholarly opinion is divided. The embassies did not see Caligula until he returned from Germany in AD 40; they might have travelled in the winter of AD 38/39 and had an extensive stay in Rome, or they might have waited for a year after Vitrasius' decision to send them, with a departure in AD 39/40 and a shorter wait in Italy.³⁵ On their first encounter, Caligula initially gave the embassies a brief, but polite reception. Seeing the Jewish delegates as he strolled on his Vatican estate on the right bank of the Tiber, he waved affably and told them that he would see them when he was free.³⁶ This first step might have heartened them, but their confidence was surely shattered a little later. They followed Caligula when he went down to Campania for the summer.³⁷ Whether or not they actually met him there is uncertain, but while in Campania they received the devastating news from Jerusalem, that he had decided to convert the temple into a centre of the imperial cult. This would have reminded the

legation of the aggressive action of Antiochus IV of Syria, when in 169 BC he dedicated the temple in Jerusalem to Zeus and ordered a statue of Zeus with his own likeness to be set up on the altar. Against this disheartening background, the proper meeting finally took place in the emperor's residence on the Esquiline Hill some time after August and ended without any clear resolution (see [Chapter 14](#)). Afterwards, the Jews waited in some trepidation for Caligula's final adjudication, but whether or not he gave serious thought to the issue will never be known, since no decision had been reached when his assassination made his attitude irrelevant. The death of Caligula and the accession of Claudius seem to have been welcomed by the Jews of Alexandria, as well as by those of the Jewish homeland, to whom attention must now be turned.

Judea is loosely referred to as a 'province' in this period, but its classification as such is misleading. It was not a true province governed by a legate or proconsul, but a discrete zone administered by an equestrian Prefect (later called a procurator) with limited devolved authority, ultimately subject to the supervision of the legate of Syria. The chronology of Caligula's plans in Judea, especially regarding the temple at Jerusalem, is much confused. We can be sure that the incidents took place in 40, since that date is essentially confirmed in Tacitus' brief survey of events in Judea leading up to the siege of Jerusalem.³⁸ The basic problem is that the accounts of Philo and Josephus are in many respects quite different, and even a simple and basic reconstruction of the events has proved something of a scholarly nightmare. The reality is that both writers are careless with the details of chronology and both tend to get the facts muddled. Hence the summary account that follows is to be regarded as tentative at best.³⁹

In his survey of events in Judea, Tacitus makes the famous comment that *sub Tiberio quies* 'under Tiberius all was quiet'. This is, of course, an overstatement, since when Pontius Pilate was Prefect there was considerable unrest, but the problems at that time were of an essentially local nature, with no repercussions outside the province. They were settled with the suspension of Pilate by Lucius Vitellius, legate of Syria. Vitellius then appointed a temporary Prefect, Marcellus, and visited Judea in person to ensure that order was being maintained. While Vitellius was engaged on his diplomatic efforts, the death of Tiberius was reported. Caligula then sent out a Marullus with some sort of authority in Judea, but it is not certain that he was the official Prefect, and in fact no activity of either Marcellus or Marullus is recorded; it may be that the legate of Syria simply imposed direct rule without the benefit of a local Prefect.⁴⁰ Certainly, when affairs of Judea now take a serious turn, it is the legate of Syria who takes control.

At some point, possibly during the winter of 39/40, riots broke out in Jamnia, a coastal town with a mixed population of Jews and Greeks, almost due west of Jerusalem. The resident Greeks erected an altar to the imperial cult, which was torn down at once by the Jews. Jamnia was part of an imperial estate inherited by Livia from Salome, sister of Herod the Great (not the notorious Salome), and as such came under the jurisdiction of the Prefect Gaius Herennius Capito, the same man who had encountered such difficulties in trying to persuade Agrippa

to meet his debts. Capito reported the affair to Caligula, who responded with a vengeance, supposedly acting on the advice of his intimates Helicon and Apelles. He decreed that the Temple of Jerusalem would be converted into an imperial shrine, with an enormous statue of the emperor in the guise of Jupiter.⁴¹ The impact of such a decision on the Jews, with their rigid monotheistic beliefs, can be easily appreciated. Other emperors seem tacitly to have acknowledged Jewish sensibilities on the matter of the ruler cult. Since Jews generally were happy to grant the emperor the highest honours available to a mortal, the emperor felt little need for formal legislation to remove their immunity and oblige them to worship him.⁴² This had now changed.

It was a fortunate circumstance that Syria was governed by a legate who matched his predecessor not only in his competence but also in his diplomacy and tact, a man who had reputedly prepared himself for his command even to the degree of undertaking a preliminary study of Jewish philosophy. Publius Petronius probably took up office in the autumn of 39. Possibly by early 40 he had been instructed to have a statue of the emperor made for the temple, and to use half the army in Syria (where four legions were regularly stationed) to handle any unrest that might ensue.⁴³ He made good use of the lengthy time that would be required for its manufacture (it was being prepared unobtrusively in Sidon). Philo says that he invited the Jewish leaders to a preliminary meeting, not mentioned in Josephus and whose precise location is unknown (Antioch would be a good possibility), in a forlorn attempt to persuade them to submit to the desecration. While they did not offer violence, their adamant refusal to accept the new measure would hardly have come as a surprise to him.⁴⁴ Philo has Petronius delaying the completion of the statue and writing to Caligula to justify the delay through fear for the harvest, arguments that fell on deaf ears and resulted in the emperor repeating his instructions.⁴⁵ Josephus' account is quite different. He has Petronius being despatched to Syria with instructions from Caligula to set up his image in the temple, by force if need be.⁴⁶ Petronius moved two of his legions south, and reached Ptolemais, just before the border of Galilee. In Josephus' account he is met by a massive demonstration of Jews, who made their convictions known so forcefully that he realised that Caligula's plan was likely to cause a major riot. He shrewdly suggested to the sculptors in Sidon that they take their time with the statue.⁴⁷ According to Josephus (the incident is not mentioned by Philo) he then left his army at Ptolemais and went with a small retinue to the Galilean capital, Tiberias, where he met a deputation of Jewish officials led by Aristobulus, nephew of Herod Antipas, who had perhaps just left for Italy to press his claim with Caligula for the title of king (see below). Further demonstrations pressed home how serious the situation had become, and Petronius was persuaded to write to Caligula to present the Jewish case, recommending that he abandon the plan.⁴⁸ Apart from the threat of force, the Jews used powerful economic arguments. They neglected their harvest and threatened even to destroy the corn in the fields, which would induce a famine at the very time when Caligula was to make a planned visit to Alexandria.⁴⁹

Philo and Josephus portray Jewish reaction to Caligula's plans as restrained and responsible, and there is no suggestion that a single life was lost.⁵⁰ But of course they are at pains to show the Jews in a good light. Tacitus, in fact, points out that they were prepared for a violent armed clash if necessary.⁵¹ It is difficult to sort out precisely what happened next. Caligula's reply to Petronius seems to have been far from conciliatory, and he suspected that the governor had been bribed.⁵² He ordered him to carry out his instructions, and to set up the statue at once. There are two versions of the events that followed; Herod Agrippa is given a key role in both, thanks possibly to the exaggerations of the largely fictitious *Life of Agrippa*. He seems to have reached Italy in the summer of 40, supposedly having no idea of what was taking place.⁵³ Josephus claims that Agrippa now saved the temple by entertaining Caligula at a splendid banquet and raising the issue at an opportune moment. Another version, related by Philo, has Agrippa suffering some sort of collapse on hearing of the planned desecration of the temple and during his recovery conveying in a letter to Caligula his advice that he rescind the project. Agrippa would have had good reason to intervene, beyond any general concern for his people, since his own kingdom was likely to be affected. In both versions Agrippa apparently succeeded where others had failed. His influence on his young protégé had not waned. Caligula, out of regard for his friend and fellow king, consented to abandon his plans. The emperor supposedly wrote to Petronius, telling him to abandon the project if it was not yet completed, but insisting that the Jews repay toleration with toleration, and not oppose further attempts by non-Jews to establish the imperial cult outside Jerusalem.⁵⁴ As a result, Petronius was able to withdraw with his army to Antioch. This version of events, in which Caligula behaved rationally, did not suit Jewish tradition or Petronius' later reputation. Another version was circulated, where Caligula regretted the favour granted to Agrippa and ordered a second, even larger statue to be constructed, in Rome. Petronius made excuses (not known) for further delay, holding his army back at Ptolemais. Caligula in fury ordered him to commit suicide, but the order was held up by bad weather, and by the time it had reached Petronius he had already received news of the emperor's assassination.⁵⁵

Although they disagree on details, both Josephus and Philo confirm that Caligula's decision to set up the statue was prompted by his claims to divinity. From a Jewish standpoint, this clearly was not an unreasonable conclusion. But Philo adds the further assertion that Caligula hated the Jews and was preparing a vast war against them. This is clearly absurd. Roman policy was basically one of reciprocity, and Roman protection of the Jewish religion was conditional on their limiting their zeal. The behaviour of the Jews at Jamnia could well have been looked upon as a hostile political act rather than merely a bout of religious fervour. How far Caligula could be held personally responsible for the problems that arose in this period is difficult to say. He did recall Flaccus and appoint a capable successor, and this specific action seems to have eased matters in Alexandria somewhat. The Jews must certainly share part of the blame. They lacked political tact in their dealings with the Greeks, as evidenced by Agrippa's conspicuous presence in Alexandria,

while the destruction of the altar at Jamnia seems to suggest the growth of a religious zeal that must have been largely independent of Caligula. The threat to take over the temple at Jerusalem was clearly in response to that action, and it has been suggested that the delays in implementing his threat, attributed by Jewish tradition to the wise policy of Petronius, may in fact have been Caligula's own strategy, as something to hold over the head of the Jews if anything like the Jamnia incident should occur again.⁵⁶ Although Caligula may not have been motivated by a general anti-Jewish animosity, there can be no doubt that his handling of the issue marks a crucial turning point in Romano-Jewish relations. Events had shown how precarious the situation of the Jews had become and how easily they could find themselves at the mercy of what they considered an arbitrary tyrant. This did not augur well for the future.

On news of Caligula's death, the Jews of Alexandria, who seem to have been stockpiling weapons, decided to even scores, and went on a rampage against the Greeks, possibly calling in fellow Jews from Egypt and Syria, until the Prefect put the rebellion down. Claudius now imposed firm control and laid down his policy in an edict delivered to the Alexandrians.⁵⁷ This remarkable document transformed the modern image of Claudius when it was published in 1924, and revealed him as an energetic and strong-willed, even statesmanlike, administrator.⁵⁸ In it Claudius does not assign individual blame but demands of both parties that there be no further disturbances. Greeks are to exercise tolerance and forbearance towards their Jewish neighbours, and to allow them to worship freely, while the Jews are not to demand privileges over and above the ones that they already possess as members of the Jewish community. They are also enjoined not to bring in other Jews from Syria and the rest of Egypt. The information can be supplemented by Josephus, who provides a summary of the Alexandria decree, which he says was sent also to Syria. Josephus' summary does not match exactly the surviving edict, and was possibly compiled by him from memory. In his version Claudius criticises the policy of Caligula for its 'madness and lack of understanding', which may well have been Josephus' own interpolation. He also adds a summary of a decree that he says Claudius sent out to all the provinces of the empire, confirming Jewish privileges similar to those enjoyed in Alexandria, with an admonition that they are not to scorn the religious beliefs of others.⁵⁹ Claudius was able to combine tact and firmness in a way that had been quite beyond the capacity of his predecessor. His reign saw further edicts and further embassies, as he struggled for some formula that might restore permanent order. Yet, despite his good intentions, sporadic disturbances continued in both Alexandria and Judea. Clearly the difficulties had not disappeared with Caligula's death. The stage was already set for a final confrontation that would culminate less than thirty years later in the devastating sack of Jerusalem by the Romans.

The general stewardship of Alexandria and Judea was a responsibility that called for considerable administrative talent, more than Caligula possessed, but the task would in fact probably have been beyond the competence of even the most enlightened princeps. Dealing with individual rulers must by contrast have

seemed almost child's play. Judea had been held as a client kingdom by Herod the Great. Herod and his family appear to have received an inordinate amount of attention from Rome's rulers, but the impression is probably a false one: it must be remembered that because of Josephus we have a detailed record of Roman involvement in this part of the world, which creates a lopsided impression of its importance to Rome. On Herod's death, probably in 4 BC, his son Archelaus succeeded him in Judea proper, as well as in Samaria and Idumea, as 'ethnarch', a title deemed preferable by Augustus to Herod's title of 'king'. Herod's two other sons, Herod Antipas and Philip, succeeded to lesser domains, as tetrarchs. Archelaus proved an incompetent ruler, and in response to appeals from his subjects Augustus banished him to Gaul in AD 6, and organised his territory as the administrative area of Judea, under an equestrian Prefect, answerable to the governor in Syria. Also, when Philip died, in 33 or 34, his territory was put under the administration of the legate of Syria, with the revenues kept separate. In 37 Caligula bestowed Philip's old tetrarchy on his friend Herod Agrippa.

Herod the Great's other son, Herod Antipas, reputedly called a 'fox' by Christ, was bequeathed the tetrarchy of Galilee and Peraea by his father, an arrangement subsequently confirmed by Augustus. With his brothers, he had been brought up in Rome, and had become a good friend of Tiberius, later naming the city of Tiberias after him.⁶⁰ He was married, probably for diplomatic reasons, to the daughter of Aretas, king of Nabataea, the wild area south of Judea.

Some time before 30 Herod Antipas fell in love with Herodias, sister of Herod Agrippa, and in order to marry discarded his wife, who fled to her father.⁶¹ This would have aggravated an already tense situation, and the military clash between Antipas and Aretas that followed some years later over a border dispute was probably inevitable.⁶² Tiberius instructed Vitellius, the then governor of Syria, to go to the assistance of Antipas, his old boyhood friend. When he received news of Tiberius' death, Vitellius broke off his preparations, possibly on his own initiative, since he would have sensed that Caligula would not have been enthusiastic about the notion of going to war against a king who was an old friend of his father Germanicus.⁶³ Moreover, Vitellius had his own reason to be upset with Antipas. When Vitellius met Artabanus on the Euphrates and the two reached terms, Antipas stole a march on the Roman commander by reporting the news.⁶⁴ It is not surprising, then, that there was a change of policy. The Nabataean Aretas now seems to have been favoured. From the end of Tiberius' reign to the beginning of Nero's the municipal coinage of Damascus in Syria ceases, and during Caligula's reign there was an 'ethnarch' of Aretas in the city. It is he who supposedly set a guard at the gate to arrest St. Paul.⁶⁵ This is sometimes taken to indicate that Damascus was in this period under Nabataean control, and might indicate an award of territory by Caligula to Aretas.⁶⁶ By contrast, support for Herod Antipas was withdrawn.

Antipas' relationship with his second wife Herodias was to cause him yet further problems, although since much of this information on the events possibly originates in the novelistic *Life of Agrippa* it is not always clear where to draw the line between fact and fiction. At his wife's urging he had helped her brother

Agrippa with his financial problems. The help was apparently rather grudging, and Antipas made the mistake on one occasion of casting Agrippa's destitution in his teeth when they were in their cups. When Agrippa's fortune improved under Caligula the success of their former dependent must have incited the envy of Herodias and Antipas, who went to Italy, probably in the summer of 40, to request that he be made king instead of merely tetrarch.⁶⁷ Agrippa had not forgotten his earlier humiliation, and, to thwart the plan, intimated to Caligula that Antipas, an old henchman of Sejanus, had been plotting against Caligula, collaborating with Artabanus, king of Parthia, and building up an arsenal of supplies for 70,000 soldiers. It may well be that Vitellius still bore a grudge against Antipas and added his weight to the accusations.⁶⁸ In any case Caligula was persuaded, and banished Antipas, probably to Lyons.⁶⁹ Herodias was spared (presumably out of regard for Agrippa) but nobly chose to share her husband's exile. Agrippa, as often, came out the winner, and was rewarded with Antipas' personal property and his tetrarchy of Galilee and Peraea. It may well be that Caligula was planning an even further expansion when he died.⁷⁰

Notes

- 1 Gruen 2002: 53. On the statutory position of the Jew under Rome: Rajak 1984.
- 2 Jos. *Ap.* 2.63.
- 3 Phil. *Flacc.* 1, *Leg.* 159–61; Jos. *AJ* 18.81–4; Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.5; Suet. *Tib.* 36.1.
- 4 Smallwood 1976: 202–8. Note that Tacitus dates the expulsion of the Jews to 19, before Sejanus would have been in a position to do serious damage.
- 5 Jos. *Ap.* 2.49.
- 6 *AJ* 14.188. The Caesar responsible for the stele must be Augustus, and not, as Josephus mistakenly assumes, Julius Caesar.
- 7 Jos. *Ap.* 2.35, cf. *BJ* 2.487. Josephus attributes similar information to Claudius: *AJ* 19.281.
- 8 Jos. *BJ* 2.488. He did intervene at one time; Phil. *Flacc.* 74 observes that when the ethnarch died Augustus stepped in to appoint a *gerousia* to oversee the affairs of the Jewish community, but this seems to have been an isolated and untypical event.
- 9 On this, see the detailed analysis in Kasher 1985: 233–357, especially 356–7; there is a summary of the scholarship before 1984 in Feldman 1984: 331–8; see also the useful shorter summaries in Barclay 1996: 65–71; Gruen 2002: 71–3; Ameling 2003: 86–93; Harker 2012: 277–9.
- 10 Philo *Flacc.* 172.
- 11 Philo *Leg.* 183, 194; Jos. *AJ* 19.281; *Ap.* 2.38–9.
- 12 See Bowman and Rathbone 1992: 112–14.
- 13 Also it is important to realise that the Jews did not form a monolithic group. Pucci 1990 shows that the Jewish community comprised different socio-economic divisions.
- 14 Phil. *Flacc.* 9, 11, 58.
- 15 Phil. *Flacc.* 16.
- 16 Phil. *Flacc.* 97–103, see also *Leg.* 178. Philo postpones mentioning it until a much later context, when Flaccus fell from grace, to emphasise it as the first step in that process; see Horst 2003: 187. Smallwood 1976: 237, n. 66 questions Philo's claim.
- 17 Kerkeslager (2006) has suggested that Philo was raising something of a smokescreen to hide some serious legal infraction on the part of the Jews, and he suggests that it involved a violation of the funerary events for Caligula's sister Drusilla.

- 18 Phil. *Flacc.* 26; on the route: Rickman 1980: 74.
- 19 Phil. *Flacc.* 30. Smallwood 1976: 239 notes that Philo is very cagey about Agrippa's conduct in Alexandria. It is very difficult to determine how he behaved there. For the possibility that Agrippa had been despatched to Alexandria to deal the communal tensions, see Kushnir-Stein 2000.
- 20 Phil. *Flacc.* 54.
- 21 On the districts, Bowman and Rathbone 1992: 114–15.
- 22 Philo *Flacc.* 55–6. Philo indicates that this took place not long after the death of Drusilla, June 10, AD 38.
- 23 Phil. *Flacc.* 55–96, *Leg.* 120–34.
- 24 Jos. *AJ* 14.117, cited by Gruen 2002: 71.
- 25 In *Flacc.* 54.
- 26 Phil. *Leg.* 179. Smallwood 1970: 252–3 argues that this shorter version of the letter was sent at the same time as the full one, through Agrippa. Philo does say, however, that Agrippa's communication was made a little earlier, *pro oligou*. Certainly Agrippa does not seem to have been in Alexandria during the serious riots.
- 27 Phil. *Flacc.* 116 shows that the Jews were celebrating the Feast of the Tabernacles at the time of Flaccus' arrest. Gaius Vitrasius Pollio is known to have arrived in Egypt on the 23rd day of Soter, October 20 (*BGU IV* 1078); see Stein 1950: 29; Schwartz 1982: 190.
- 28 Philo *Leg.* 356.
- 29 Philo *Leg.* 119–21, 133, 162–5.
- 30 Strabo 17.13 called Alexandria the commercial centre of the world, and Orosius *Pag.* 6.19.19 says that at the time of Actium it was by far the greatest and wealthiest of all cities.
- 31 Bell 1941; Smallwood 1976: 233–5; Yavetz 1997: 103–4.
- 32 See in particular Gruen 2002: 63–5; Gambetti 2009: 195–212.
- 33 Phil. *Flacc.* 29, *Leg.* 120; Jos. *Con. Ap.* 2.32; Blouin 2005: 126–9 notes that the Egyptians are scorned in both Jewish and Greek sources and that both the Jewish and Greek communities would seek to associate the other with the Egyptians.
- 34 Jos. *AJ* 257 gives the number of three delegates each, but Philo, who was there, gives the total number of Jews as five (*Leg.* 370). Other than Philo, we do not know the other delegates, but Philo's brother Alexander Lysimachus was in Rome at some point and was imprisoned by Caligula (*AJ* 19.276); he may have been part of the Jewish team. Apion's presence on the Greek side is indicated by *AJ* 18.257–60.
- 35 Each date presents a problem. The delegates sailed during the winter (Phil. *Leg.* 190). The arrival of the envoys in 38/9 would necessitate their presence in Rome for a year; their arrival in 39/40 would mean a delay in their departure for over a year after the deposition of Flaccus. 38/9 is preferred by, *inter alios*, Willrich 1903: 410 n. 1; Gelzer 1918b: 397; Sijpestein 1964: 87–96; Schwartz 1990: 196–9; Gruen 2002: 65–6, 281 n. 84 (very tentatively); Hollander 2014: 42 (tentatively). 39/40 is favoured by Balsdon 1934a: 19–24; Smallwood 1970: 47–50. Gambetti 2009: 256 prudently observes that 'orderly caution is the best strategy'.
- 36 Phil. *Leg.* 181–4.
- 37 Phil. *Leg.* 185.
- 38 Tac. *Hist.* 5.9.
- 39 Phil. *Leg.* 197–335; Jos. *AJ* 18.248–300. Smallwood 1957; 1970: 281–3 lays out the arguments in favour of Philo, criticised by Bilde 1978: 67–93, who favours Josephus. Schwartz 1990: 80 argues for two separate stages in the events, those described by Philo belonging to the spring, those by Josephus to the autumn; more recently Gambetti 2009: 258–66 favours Josephus.
- 40 De Laet 1939: 418–19; Schwartz 1990: 62–3 suggests that Marullus (*AJ* 18.237), described as a *hipparches*, is the same as the Marcellus appointed by Vitellius as Pilate's successor. Josephus does say that Caligula 'sent out' *ekpempēi* Marullus.

- 41 Phil. *Leg.* 201–2. The Jamnia incident in 39/40 is not mentioned by Josephus, although he does record the earlier bequest of Salome (*AJ* 18.158). Slingerland 1997: 84 mentions the possibility that Caligula's intention might have been to have his statue within the precinct of the temple as a significant personage, for which there would be many precedents in pagan temples. The incident would have been grist for the mill of those whose agenda was to depict him as an irresponsible, if not insane, ruler, and the silence of the Roman sources about Caligula's supposed plan for the temple is troubling. Wilkinson 2005: 58 ponders the possibility that the notion of his wanting his image in the temple might have resulted from some humorous quip. The topic of the intended cult of Caligula in Jerusalem, within the context of underlying tensions, has recently been treated in considerable detail by Bilde 2011.
- 42 The topic is usefully reviewed by Noy 2001.
- 43 Phil. *Leg.* 207–8; Jos. *AJ* 18.261. Some scholars have maintained that New Testament texts such as Mark 13.14–20 refer to Caligula's plan for the temple; see Swain 1944: 341–9; Brandon 1967: 88–92, 230, but the evidence is far from clear. The Byzantine historian John Malalas (10.315) recounts a riot that took place in Antioch, the administrative seat of Syria, in 39–40 (dated by the presence of Petronius in the province). What began as a fracas in the theatre developed into an attack on the Jews and the burning of their synagogue. Phineas, the high priest in Jerusalem, is supposed to have called in 30,000 men to seek vengeance. There is obviously much distortion and exaggeration in this report, which is found in neither Philo nor Josephus, but it is just possible that it echoes events connected with the threat to the temple. Malalas' story is accepted by Bratianu 1937: 96–7; Downey 1961: 193–4; and by implication, Browning 1952: 18. Kraeling 1932: 148–9 notes that the story is unsubstantiated and argues that the theatre locale is implausible, but accepts that a serious disturbance of some kind probably did take place.
- 44 Phil. *Leg.* 222–4; this meeting is not mentioned by Josephus. Taylor 2001 also draws attention to the popular opposition, especially in Galilee.
- 45 Phil. *Leg.* 245–53.
- 46 Jos. *AJ* 18.261.
- 47 Jos. *AJ* 18.262–9, *BJ* 2.187.
- 48 Jos. *AJ* 18.269–83; *BJ* 2.192–201. Phil. *Leg.* 248, 254 says nothing of his visit to Tiberius and has Petronius write from Ptolemais.
- 49 Phil. *Leg.* 248–53; Jos. *AJ* 18.272, 274–5; *BJ* 2.200–2. The date of the harvest is the key to the chronological problems. Philo dates the demonstrations, which he locates only in Ptolemais, to the time of the grain harvest (April–June). Josephus puts them in Tiberias and dates them to the seed time (late autumn); see the summary in Gambetti 2009: 264–6.
- 50 Barnett 1975: 569 observes that if Jewish nationalism had been at its height at this period a war of liberation would have occurred.
- 51 Tac. *Hist.* 5.9. The incident is not mentioned by Suetonius.
- 52 The bribe is accepted as possible by Willrich 1903: 417; Balsdon 1934b: 138; Bilde 1978: 85–6.
- 53 Schwartz 1990: 85–7 argues that Agrippa had known of the temple plan for some time, and that both Philo and Josephus have elaborated the account of his intervention. Bilde 1978: 89 even suggests that there was collaboration between Agrippa and Petronius for the latter to hold things up long enough for Agrippa to work on Caligula.
- 54 Phil. *Leg.* 261–335; Jos. *AJ* 289–301. Zeitlin 1965 disputes the authenticity of the letter, basically on the grounds that its terms would have been unacceptable to an emperor suffering from insane megalomania.
- 55 Phil. *Leg.* 337; Jos. *AJ* 18.302–9, *BJ* 2.203; see Lichtenstein 1931–2: 300; Winter 1956; Bilde 1978: 88–9. The Jewish Megillat Ta'anit, at the end of February, was recorded as a day of joy because the work that the 'enemy' had ordered to be placed in the temple

- 'was stopped'. Bilde rejects the motif of Caligula's change of mind and argues that Agrippa's recommendation was final. Schwartz 1990: 87–8 finds the idea plausible.
- 56 Pollini 2012: 369–411.
- 57 *PLond.* 1912 (Smallwood 370); *Jos. AJ* 19.278–85. Line 88 of the decree, where Claudius speaks of 'having listened to both sides' suggests that Jews and Greeks sent a deputation. Since Claudius refers to himself as consul designate, the edict, if correctly quoted, presumably dates to after July, when the elections were normally held, in AD 41; the presence of Jews from Egypt and Syria is inferred from the later proscription in lines 96–8 of the decree, where the Jews are prohibited against bringing in people from those areas.
- 58 Bell 1924: 1–37.
- 59 *Jos. AJ* 19.286–91.
- 60 *Jos. AJ* 18.36; Luke 13.32.
- 61 *Jos. AJ* 18.109–12; see Smallwood 1976: 185.
- 62 *Jos. AJ* 18.113. The territory in question was probably Gabala. The manuscripts read 'Gamala', which would indicate a region that belonged to Philip's former tetrarchy and could not have been the subject of a dispute between Aretas and Antipas; see Negev 1977: 567–9. On the conflict, see Poschinski 1980: 150–4.
- 63 *Jos. AJ* 18.120–6.
- 64 *Jos. AJ* 18.105.
- 65 II *Cor.* 11.32, *Acts.* 9.23–5.
- 66 Rey-Coquais 1978: 50–1 suggests that the ethnarch was there only as consul of Aretas and that Damascus remained part of the empire through this period.
- 67 There is some uncertainty over the date of their visit to Italy; *Jos. AJ* 19.351 shows that Agrippa acquired Antipas' tetrarchy in his fourth year as king (40–1). The latest coins of Antipas date to his third year, 39–40 (Hill 1914: 230).
- 68 *Jos. AJ* 18.240–55, *BJ* 181–3; see Schwartz 1990: 56–7.
- 69 *Jos. AJ* 18.252 states that Antipas went to Lugdunum in Gaul, which should mean Lyons, but at *BJ* 2.183 says he was exiled to Spain, where he died. He may have gone first to Lyons, then to Spain, or he might have been sent to Lugdunum Convenarum, a town in Gaul on the Spanish frontier (discussed by Braund 1984b: 177, n. 76); *Jos. AJ* 18.105 claimed that Vitellius got his revenge on Antipas over the Euphrates incident on the accession of Caligula; on the possible role of Vitellius, see Schwartz 1990: 59.
- 70 As suggested by Schwartz 1990: 62.

CALIGULA THE BUILDER

While Augustus' boast that he found Rome a city built of brick and left it one of marble is not, of course, literally accurate, there can be no denying that his reign was marked by a series of magnificent architectural schemes, many of them initiated under the direction of Marcus Agrippa.¹ By contrast, while his successor Tiberius was conscientious about keeping existing buildings in good repair and in assisting cities in genuine financial need, he did not share Augustus' zeal for transforming the physical face of Rome, and, in keeping with his decidedly austere and frugal view of life, felt an aversion towards costly and unnecessary public works. It is hardly surprising that Caligula did not take his lead from his immediate predecessor, but sought to revive the family tradition begun by Augustus and Agrippa. He seems to have taken a genuine personal interest in the visual arts, and would have seen in architecture a chance to grace the Roman world with a tangible symbol of his greatness.

At all periods, Romans seem to have felt an obsessive need to own precious *objets d'art* and Caligula was no exception; like a Roman prototype of Hermann Göring, Caligula combed the world to plunder beautiful pieces to adorn his capital city. The sources generally consider his zeal to have been directed towards perverted ends. As mentioned in [Chapter 9](#), Pheidias' great statue of Zeus was reputedly to be brought to Rome from the Temple of Olympia to be converted into a cult statue of Caligula himself.² Where no such quasi-political or propaganda purpose can be detected, his erotic obsessions are cited – his lust supposedly drove him to ruin two beautiful nude paintings of Atalanta and Helen at Lanuvium when he tried to remove the plaster from the wall. The seizure of the famous Cupid of Thespieae was popularly thought to have placed him under a fatal curse, since his murderer Chaerea was in part motivated by taunts about his sexual inclinations. The Cupid was returned by Claudius, repossessed by Nero, and eventually destroyed by fire in Rome.³ Perhaps the most vivid illustration of Caligula's personal obsession with art is provided by the meeting in 40 between the emperor and the Jewish delegation seeking to promote the cause of their fellows in Alexandria. A discussion on the political rights of the Jews was cut short by a tour of a large room, where he ordered the windows to be replaced; no sooner had the discussion resumed than

they were shepherded into another room where he made arrangements for pictures to be hung (see [Chapter 14](#)).⁴ Although allowance must be made for exaggeration, Philo's basic portrait of Caligula as would-be connoisseur and aesthete is probably not very wide of the mark.

Caligula's eagerness for public works seems to have left a firm impression on the public imagination, and Suetonius records feats of almost Biblical proportions, of moles built out into the depths of the sea, of passages carved through crags of the hardest flint and even of mountains levelled.⁵ These have the ring of *topoi*, of the arrogant enterprises of the stock tyrant. But, beyond the hyperbole, Caligula's record is, in fact, remarkable for one who had so short a reign. Some of the projects serve to remind us that despite his often erratic behaviour the routine and prosaic functions of the state continued. He showed, for instance, a keen interest in the upkeep of the public highways. In 20 BC Augustus had been given responsibility for the roads in Italy and reorganised (if he did not create) a board of *ex-tractors* as road commissioners. As early as AD 21 a senator, Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo (on his identity see [Chapter 6](#)), began to prosecute the commissioners because of the damaged condition of the thoroughfares, and those found guilty were obliged to make the appropriate repairs at their own expense, even though in some cases it meant that they had to sell their personal property.⁶ Caligula apparently welcomed Corbulo as an ally in his policy of attacking incompetent commissioners. In a confused report Dio seems to suggest that he brought charges against those who had let fraudulent contracts and those who had negligently omitted to make use of the funds budgeted.⁷ These measures seem to have caused some resentment. At any rate Claudius later stopped the prosecutions and returned the money taken in fines, either from the public treasury or from Corbulo personally.⁸

Caligula's concern with communications was not restricted to Italy. He revived the project of building a canal across the Isthmus of Corinth and had even reached the point of sending a military surveyor to carry out the preliminary work before he died. This scheme goes back at least to Periander, the sixth century BC tyrant of Corinth, and it was revived by Nero after Caligula's death. Nero actually started construction. It would not in fact be completed until 1893!⁹ Also in the sphere of communications was the lighthouse built at Boulogne, intended initially to assist the movement of transport ships between Britain and the continent for the supply of the invading Roman army. The structure was still standing until the mid-sixteenth century, and surviving drawings provide a general impression of its original appearance, although it is likely that much of the finished project should be credited not to Caligula but to Claudius and to later repairs. It took the form of a polygonal pyramid in twelve stages, with a base of 19.5 m, reaching a height of over 35 m (some authorities say as high as 60); each stage had eight openings, consisting of seven windows and one large door (on the north face). The stages were constructed of alternating bands of yellow stones, red bricks and grey stones, bonded with concrete.¹⁰

Suetonius' suggestion that Caligula planned to found a city high in the Alps, when combined with his separate comment about levelling mountains and

tunnelling through flint, may suggest that there was road building in the Alpine regions, presumably to improve communications with Gaul and Germany. In Strabo's day the Little St. Bernard Pass was paved – the Great St. Bernard leading to the Vallis Pennina was not, but would be by at least the time of Claudius, and the paving should perhaps be attributed to Caligula – dedications to him are known from the Vallis Pennina.¹¹ Spain provides evidence of his road building activities there. Nor was his interest limited to construction and maintenance. He seems to have been particularly obsessed with cleanliness. The future emperor Vespasian had, when aedile, reportedly neglected this aspect of his duties and as punishment Caligula ordered mud to be heaped into his toga, surely a humiliating experience for Vespasian at the time, but one that he could later represent as an omen that Rome was destined to be entrusted to his care.¹²

The water supply was also one of Caligula's concerns. The seven existing aqueducts supplying Rome were no longer deemed adequate and he began the construction of two more, the Aqua Claudia and the Anio Novus.¹³ These were left unfinished at the time of his death, and Claudius completed them. The Claudia, which was considered by Pliny to be one of the great engineering feats of his day, may have been completed as early as 47, but it was not dedicated until 52, by which time the Anio Novus was finally completed (and dedicated at the same time).¹⁴

Almost as important as the water supply was the adequate provision of grain for Rome. Responsibility for its supply lay with a Prefect, the *praefectus annonae*, the position being occupied under Caligula by a Gaius Turannius, who had held it since the time of Augustus. Caligula tried to edge him out of office (he was now in his nineties). Turannius clearly felt himself indispensable, and engaged in a spectacular publicity stunt, laying himself out as if he were dead, while the household mourned him. The emperor, perhaps against his better judgement, relented, and Turannius lived to serve under Claudius.¹⁵ Problems connected with the grain supply had plagued Tiberius, leading to riots in 32, and that these problems continued under Caligula cannot be doubted. Suetonius says that several times he 'condemned the people to hunger' by shutting up the granaries, and suggests that by commandeering all the transport facilities to move goods to Gaul for auction he caused problems in the bread supply. There seems to have been a particularly serious crisis in the winter of 40/1. Seneca claims that when Caligula died there were supplies of grain sufficient for only seven or eight days because the resources had been channelled into the construction of the bridge at Baiae, and Dio makes a similar accusation.¹⁶ Clearly, this specific charge is absurd, since the bridge was almost certainly built in 39, and could barely have had any effect in the period immediately before Caligula's death.¹⁷ Probably what was a genuine grain crisis was simply blamed on the most outlandish episode at hand. Certainly the problems recurred under Claudius in 42, finally persuading him to begin the reconstruction of the new harbour at Ostia.¹⁸ It was with the difficulties of the grain supply in mind that Caligula undertook the large-scale improvement of the harbour at Rhegium (on the 'toe' of Italy, opposite Sicily), which Josephus

considered to be his only public work worth mentioning, and which he believed would have been of enormous benefit to ships transporting grain from Egypt (it was not finished). Suetonius' allusion to the moles in the deep sea could well be to this project. One might wonder why the harbour needed to be extended in the first place. It was too far south to have been of use to Rome, and may have been intended for the supply of grain to southern Italy.¹⁹

Many cities throughout the empire will have benefited from Caligula's generosity, although in some cases we have only scattered allusions. At Sardis in Asia he appears to have helped in the repair of an aqueduct.²⁰ At Attaleia in Pamphylia a colonnade seems to have been completed during his reign.²¹ At Syracuse he rebuilt the dilapidated city walls and temples, and it is possible that he organised games there to celebrate their repair.²² At Bologna he seems to have undertaken the repair of a bath house given to the town originally by Augustus. Antioch was apparently favoured by him after a major earthquake in 37, with the construction of a baths complex and an aqueduct, although the evidence is to be treated with caution, since the source is the Byzantine scholar, John Malalas, who is often confused and unreliable.²³ Caligula would certainly have been well disposed towards the city, which had shown its affection for his father Germanicus at the time of his death.

Inevitably it was in Rome that Caligula's policy was to make its greatest impact. Many of his projects were of a type that would have helped increase his popularity with the masses.²⁴ The theatre of Pompey, the first permanent stone theatre of Rome, built in 52 BC, had been destroyed by fire in AD 22. Repairs were begun under Tiberius and seem to have been completed in different phases. Tacitus implies that the theatre was finished by Tiberius; Dio indicates that it was finally restored and dedicated by Claudius, who credited Tiberius with the restoration of the stage building. Suetonius explicitly states that the work on the theatre was completed by Caligula; it would certainly have been in character for Claudius to have begrudged his immediate predecessor any credit for the work.²⁵ Probably the favourite forms of entertainment in Rome were the animal and gladiatorial shows, and Caligula sought to make further provision for these, in the area of the Saepta, which had been completed and dedicated by Agrippa in 26 BC as a voting place, close to the Pantheon. He demolished many large buildings in the area, at great expense, to erect an amphitheatre, possibly a wooden one. No further progress was reported and the plan was abandoned by Claudius, who proudly records his repair near the Saepta of the arches of the Aqua Virgo damaged by Caligula, which may have been caused by the building of the amphitheatre.²⁶

Caligula's personal obsession was with the racetrack, and it is hardly surprising that this should have left its mark among his building projects. Two tracks are associated with him, both in the *Ager Vaticanus*, on land that once belonged to his parents (see [Chapter 3](#)). On the level ground in this area Caligula was able to indulge his passion for chariot racing, and to that end constructed two facilities. The more modest was a track where he would practice. Dio provides the name for this, the Gaianum, and notes that it was still known by this name in his own time

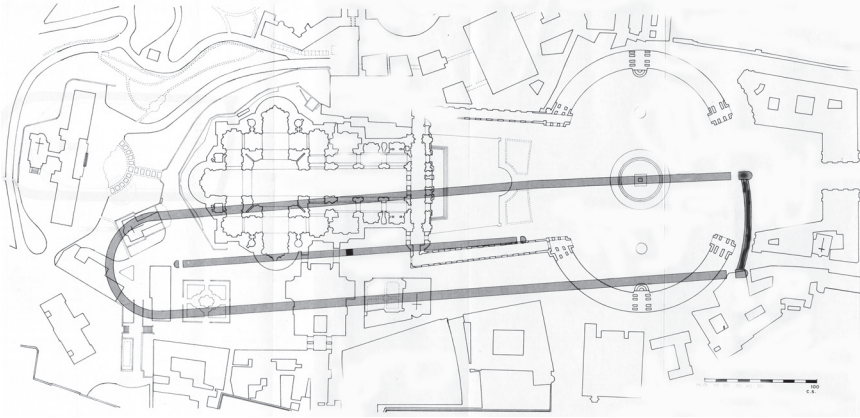


Figure 11.1 Caligula's circus (after Magi)

(third century). Documents from the fourteen and sixteenth centuries refer to an area called the Caianus (or Cayanus) to the north-west of Hadrian's Tomb (Castel St. Angelo). There are interestingly a number of inscriptions found in the area of the Porta Sant'Angelo, referring to the Green faction, and it is immediately after noting Caligula's adherence to the Greens that Dio mentions the Gaianum.²⁷ Architectural remains found outside the Porta were identified in the nineteenth century by Lanciani as traces of the Gaianum, but his interpretation has not won widespread agreement.²⁸ Suetonius reports that he rode in a circus built 'in many manners' (*aurigabat exstructo plurifariam circo*), hence in some places with a proper structure and others perhaps with wood and hedges, which could explain the scarcity of remains.²⁹

Far more important than the Gaianum is the circus laid out by Caligula (see Figure 11.1) in his mother's gardens.³⁰ Pliny twice refers to it, both times calling it the Circus Vaticanus, and on one occasion identifying it specifically as the 'Circus of Gaius and Nero', implying later modifications by Nero. Also Suetonius speaks of Claudius frequently holding races in the Circus Vaticanus.³¹ The area is of great historical importance. It was here that the Christians were put to death by Nero, and from an early date Christian tradition revered it as the site of Peter's martyrdom. It was probably this tradition that led Constantine in the fourth century to locate the great church of St Peter at the south-east foot of the Mons Vaticanus, where he created an enormous level platform by cutting away part of the hill on the north and using the spoil to build a ramp, burying a number of pagan tombs in the process.³² The notes made by Giacomo Grimaldi showed that the piers of the southern nave of the church stood on what were identified as the northern walls of the circus, lying below the foundation levels. Constantine's church was replaced by the familiar St. Peter's Basilica in the sixteenth century.

We are fortunate in being able to provide a very specific location for the circus through Caligula's most lasting contribution to the cityscape of Rome, the famous

obelisk that currently stands in St. Peter's square. This obelisk, we know from Pliny, was relocated by Caligula from Egypt to the circus, and it is generally agreed that it would have stood in the traditional location in the middle of the *spina*, the central barrier that ran down its long axis. The Vatican obelisk is a fascinating monument in its own right.³³ Made by Nencoreus, son of Seosis, it had originally been located in the Forum Julianum at Alexandria. It stands 25 m high. Pliny records that it suffered damage when it was moved (it weighs over 300 tons); there is no sign of the damage today, and Magi has speculated that the obelisk was in fact originally 45 m high, nearly twice its present height. Its original inscription, marking its dedication by the disgraced governor of Egypt, Cornelius Gallus, was replaced by a new one, honouring Augustus and Tiberius.³⁴ It remained in its first Roman location until 1586, when Pope Sixtus V ordered it to be relocated as the centrepiece of Bernini's magnificent portico in St. Peter's Square, where it has become one of modern Rome's most familiar landmarks. It was surmounted by a gilt bronze ball with a small obelisk-shaped pointer, which was for long thought to contain the ashes of Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius. The ball is preserved in the Conservatori Museum in Rome, and in its place now stands a cross, supported by the original acanthus ornaments. At the base of the obelisk were four astragal-shaped bronze supports, now concealed by lions.

The general topography of the Vatican area suggests that the circus had an east–west orientation. Since the first Roman location of the obelisk is known from drawings predating its removal in 1586, it provides the position of the transverse axis, which in turn allows a reasonable conjecture of the course of the walls, confirming a long-held belief that the south wall of Constantine's church stood on the north walls of Caligula's circus.³⁵ In 1939, however, when preparations were being made for the tomb of Pius XI, pagan tombs were discovered beneath the original floor of the church, and a systematic programme of excavating and restoring then was initiated. One of the most significant outcomes, for our purposes, was that no trace could be discovered of the circus, or of the road (Via Cornelia) that had been presumed to run to the north of it, providing the necessary access. The foundation walls of Constantine's structure seem in the main to have stood on natural soil. But the excavations did provide striking confirmation for the notion that the circus was somewhere in the general vicinity of St. Peter's. The mausoleum of Gaius Popilius Heracla, located in the northern street of the necropolis, still retained the marble slab recording the final arrangements for burial, which include the instruction that his tomb was to be located *in Vatic(ano) ad circum*.³⁶

There have been further important archaeological investigations since then. In 1959 Castagnoli carried out a study of the initial location of the obelisk. He found what he believed was the original surface of the track, consisting of sand, over gravel, clay, charcoal and ashes, with a bedding of cobbled stone; unfortunately, there is no way of proving that this surface belonged to the arena. Most significant, however, was the failure to find the *spina*, which, Castagnoli concluded, must not have been continuous. Another important study was published by Magi in

1972–3, with a report on drilling cores carried out around St Peter's Basilica, along with a reinterpretation of two parallel curving walls discovered in 1949 to the east of the end of the southern colonnade of St Peter's Square, under Via del Santo Uffizio. The outer wall is 1.5 m thick, 3.23 m high, convex in shape, bulging to the east. To the west of it, about 2.3 m distant, runs a parallel wall, 2.2 m thick. The space between would presumably have been vaulted. The convex curves of the walls are what demand attention, since they would suit the foundations for the row of starting gates (*carceres*) for the competitors. The need to double up as retaining walls for the platform of the circus may explain why these foundations are so massive. The wide platform above the foundations could well have accommodated both the starting booths and a connecting corridor running behind them. If they are the *carceres*, we can more or less double the distance between them and the obelisk to determine the overall length of the circus. Coarelli, however, suggests that the walls may in fact be the turn at the eastern extremity of the track, with the *carceres* located at the other end (he notes that *carceres* were usually located at the western end of a circus). Liverani argues that they are not the walls of the *carceres*, and interprets them as terracing connected with the levelling required for the building of the circus, thus not as part of the circus' actual structure.³⁷ In Liverani's scheme the overall dimensions of the circus might well have been much smaller than conjectured by Magi. Additionally, Magi reinterpreted a wall (1.2 m) found in 1937 at the base of the steps of St Peter's. This he relates to the walls reported in the sixteenth century at the time of the building of the new Basilica. Magi thus might claim to have given some new life to the old view that the north wall of the arena would have run south of the tombs beneath St Peter's nave. As reconstructed on the basis of the drill holes, Magi's arena would extend as far west as San Stefano, where the hill slopes steeply, on the assumption that the obelisk stood midway along the axis. Its length would be some 560 m, only about 20 m shorter than the Circus Maximus, a similarity that Humphrey suggests may not have been accidental.³⁸

The reconstruction is, of course, very tentative. One of the main problems is that the track runs at a level 7–9 m lower than later tombs that overlie it, and it is difficult to explain such a build-up of material. Also, it is far from certain that even if Magi's dimensions are correct, this indicates the extent of the arena as actually completed by Caligula. The monumental structure could have been completed by one of his successors, either Claudius or Nero, and Pliny's reference to the circus *Gaii et Neronis* implies that Nero had some part in its construction. We cannot be sure that in Caligula's time it was used for anything more than private chariot racing. But Claudius certainly gave public races in *Vaticano*, with beast-baiting between every five races. Nero seems at first to have used the area for private races, but by at least 64, when the Christians were executed in the Vatican Circus on the charge of setting fire to the city, he put on public games at which he drove a chariot himself.³⁹ No specific references to games there post-date Nero, and it has been speculated that the grounds, like Nero's Golden House, may have been given to the public by Vespasian, as a move to win popular support.

The later history of the circus remains obscure. The literary sources remain silent except for a single entry of doubtful reliability on Elagabalus (218–22), who, like Caligula and Nero, had a passion for chariot racing. He is said to have driven chariots drawn by four elephants in *Vaticano*, knocking down tombs that blocked his way. No further reference is known, suggesting that the building did not long survive Elagabalus.⁴⁰

There is one final chapter to the story of Caligula's circus. When the obelisk was moved to its current location, in 1586, the undertaking was considered a major engineering feat. It served to emphasise the magnitude of the task of bringing it from Egypt to Rome in the first place. A massive transport ship was designed for that earlier project, modelled probably on the great grain carriers used on the Ostia–Alexandria route, and described by Pliny as the most wonderful sight on the sea, so huge that it required 120,000 modii of lentils for ballast. After it had fulfilled its initial purpose, the ship proved to be commercially impractical; it was kept for some time by Claudius as a curio, before being sunk at Ostia, as part of the mole to support the lighthouse in the great Claudian reconstruction of the harbour. When Rome's airport was constructed between 1957 and 1960, the Claudian harbour was recovered, revealing the boats that had been filled with concrete before being sunk to form the north mole. In the central section the great mass of concrete used for the foundation of the lighthouse has survived, thus preserving a solid mould of the original ship, providing approximate dimensions of some 100 m by 20 m.⁴¹

Many of the architectural projects of Caligula, while on a grandiose scale, did serve a utilitarian purpose, or at least provide a public amenity. Others can be categorised as exercises in luxurious self-indulgence. These would include, for instance, the rebuilding of the palace of Polycrates at Samos, which Willrich speculates may have been intended to provide accommodation on his planned eastern tour.⁴² It has been suggested that Caligula misidentified the ruins of the famous temple of Hera, which stood at the mouth of the river Imbrasos, as Polycrates' palace (which would have been on the acropolis).

Within the category of self-indulgences belong also his 'Liburnian galleys', vividly described by Suetonius, 'with jewelled sterns, multicoloured sails, extravagant baths, colonnades, banqueting halls, with even a diversity of vines and fruit trees. He could recline on them from an early hour and roam the coastline of Campania amidst songs and choruses'.⁴³ None of these seagoing vessels has survived, but Suetonius' description of their opulence receives some confirmation from the two famous ships recovered from Lake Nemi in the Alban Hills (see [Figures 11.2](#) and [11.3](#)).⁴⁴ The beauty of Nemi explains its attraction for Romans like Julius Caesar, who had a villa there (he tore it down because he was not satisfied with it). It has since remained a popular haunt for artists, visited by the likes of Turner and Lear. In ancient times it was the setting for the grove of Aricia, where the goddess Diana was worshipped with savage rites, and where Caligula is said to have revived the ancient ritual (see [Chapter 9](#)). The presence of two ancient ships in the depths of Lake Nemi was known for centuries, and

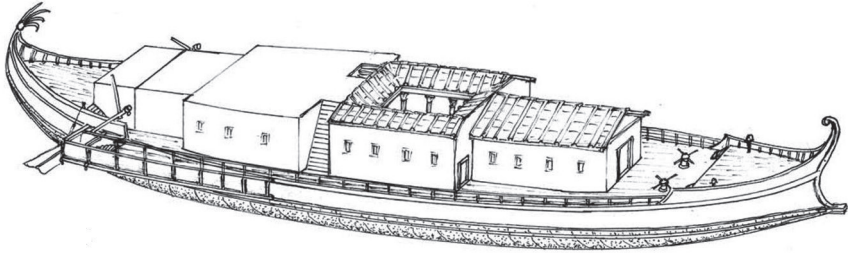


Figure 11.2 Nemi Ship 1 (drawing by Marco Bonino)

attempts to lift them date from the fifteenth century. Beginning in the late 1920s, in a major engineering project, the lake was drained and the vessels recovered, only to be destroyed in 1944, together with the museum that housed them, during the German retreat.

The ships are large for pleasure craft, and have aptly been described as floating villas. Much work has been done on their architecture and construction by Marco Bonino, in association with a project to rebuild a full-scale replica of Ship 1, the first to be exposed, in 1929. This vessel (71 m by 20 m) had no apparent means of propulsion and would probably have been towed. The evidence for the superstructure is sparse; Bonino envisages a large building as well as a smaller one, with various chambers and corridors. Ship 2 (71 m by 24 m) was self-propelled, since there was provision for rowers: some of its beams projected out the sides as a frame for outriggers that would have housed oarsmen, twenty-four on each side. There is fuller evidence for the superstructure, which included a temple-like

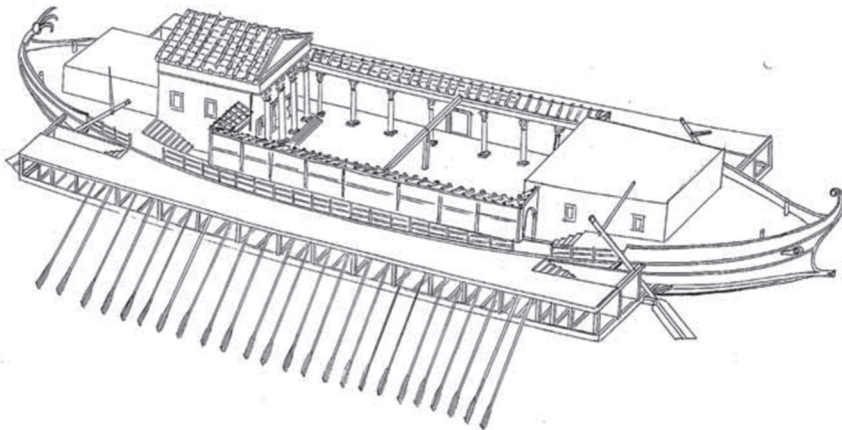


Figure 11.3 Nemi Ship 2 (drawing by Marco Bonino)

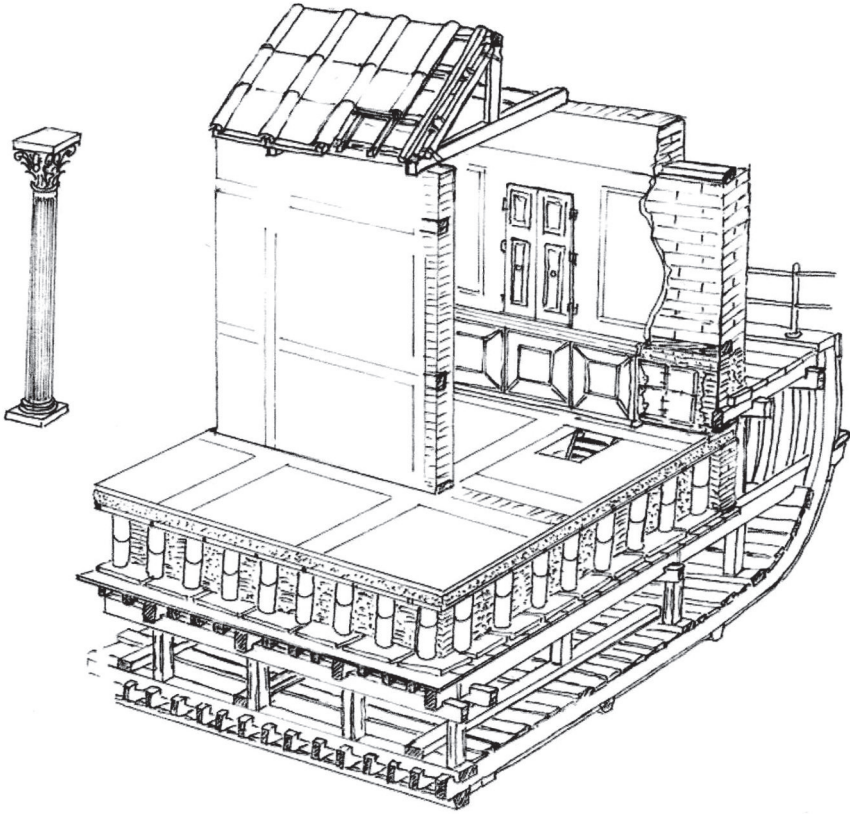


Figure 11.4 Section of Nemi Ship 2 (drawing by Marco Bonino)

building at the rear and a smaller, square, structure at the front, both of these joined by colonnades along each side of the boat, forming a peristyle in the middle.

Construction under Caligula is virtually confirmed by his name on inscribed water pipes, but it seems likely that one of the boats was redecorated under Nero, to judge from the style of the mosaics.⁴⁵ They have added greatly to our understanding of the details of Roman naval architecture. They were constructed in the standard ancient fashion: the outer shell of the vessel was formed first, then the planks added, secured at the ends by carefully worked mortise and tenon joints. The joints were not caulked, but packed with tow and smeared with clay. The quality of workmanship is extremely high. Careful use was made of nails, small copper ones for the lighter work, iron ones for the heavier joins. Where iron nails were used, holes were bored and filled with soft wood to avoid the danger of splitting. The whole surface was then covered by woollen cloth dipped in pitch and resin for waterproofing, and finally by thin plates of lead. The latter is an unusual feature, since as a precaution against marine borers it would hardly have been

necessary in fresh water. The quality of the interior decoration matched that of the construction. The boats were served with running water (as evidenced by the lead pipes) and the quarters were lavishly decorated, although we cannot be sure how much is owed to later restoration. The floors were covered with mosaics, the walls revetted in some places with marble, in others with mosaics, although the discovery of wood with traces of painted design and inlaid ivory shows that there was considerable variety. In places the walls were crowned by a terracotta frieze. The wooden ceilings were inlaid with roof tiles on which copper plates were set and gilded. Throughout, exquisite bronze decorations were used, even for the utilitarian parts. A fine Medusa head, for instance, topped the rudder pole of one of the ships. Some of the architectural splendour associated with the 'Liburnian galleys' is echoed by the discovery of four matching columns of Africano marble; a single spiral-fluted column with a Corinthian capital is also known, one of the earliest recorded instances of this style of fluting, unless it belongs to the later Neronian refurbishment.⁴⁶ Seneca makes reference to such richly decorated ships in his time, saying that we should judge them essentially by their seaworthiness and not by the fact that they are done out in expensive colours, with a prow adorned with silver and gold and its figurehead worked in ivory, and are opulent with royal wealth.⁴⁷ On the later history of these vessels we can only speculate. They were not simply abandoned, as the remaining bronze decorations, which would have been stripped away, were left in place. There are numerous legends, even including one that Caligula sank them during a drunken orgy. Ship 1, to judge from its decoration, continued until shortly after the death of Nero. Ship 2 may have been scuttled in the aftermath of Caligula's assassination.

Caligula clearly appreciated the pleasures of fine living when visiting spots like Nemi or his villas in Campania. He seems to have aspired to a similar level of luxury when he was obliged to stay in Rome. The extent and extravagance of his personal residences in the city are illustrated by an observation of Pliny that in his lifetime he had seen the city ringed by the houses of Caligula and Nero.⁴⁸ The latter allusion, as Pliny goes on to explain, is to the Golden House of Nero, a luxurious range planned after the great fire of 64 to link the Esquiline with the Palatine. Caligula's projects must have made a similar visual impact but their extent and nature are more difficult to determine. He inherited estates in at least three places within the urban area. His mother's gardens in the Vatican area, technically outside the city limits, with their portico and covered walkway, have already been mentioned. There may have been a villa on the slope of the Mons Vaticanus, from which he was able to watch Antonia's funeral pyre in the Campus Martius.⁴⁹ In addition, he had properties on the Esquiline, which he inherited from Tiberius. They also lay just outside the city limits, and it was here that he met the Alexandrian embassies, described so vividly by Philo. The grounds were made up of two adjoining estates. The Horti Lamiani were possibly laid out by Lucius Aelius Lamia, consul in AD 3, and left by him to Tiberius, to become imperial property, since there is epigraphic evidence that they were managed by a procurator. In these gardens Caligula's body received its first, temporary,

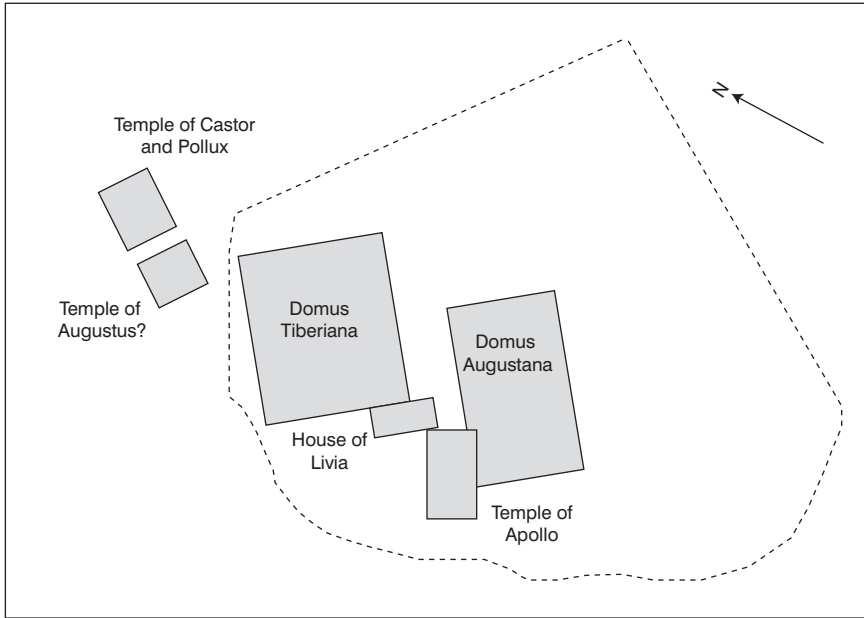


Figure 11.5 The Palatine

burial immediately after his death. Adjoining them were the Horti Maecenatis, laid out on the Esquiline by Maecenas, transforming the area into a beautiful promenade, and possibly containing Maecenas' hot swimming pool, the first such amenity built in Rome. These became imperial property after the death of their founder, and Tiberius lived here on his return to the city in AD 2. The precise location and geographic relationship of these two estates are uncertain, and later rebuilding over the centuries in the Esquiline area makes the chances of their recovery unlikely. Scattered finds have been attributed to the complexes. These include a large collection of very fine gems, originally inlaid, and strips of gilt with wood fibre adhering to them, suggesting gilt panels or furniture. It has been argued that these formed part of a splendid throne of Caligula – Dio speaks of a throne placed on the Capitol to symbolise Caligula's presence when he was away on his northern campaigns.⁵⁰

By Caligula's day the 'official' imperial residence, as opposed to his several private estates dispersed in various locations, was firmly established on one of the most significant historical areas of Rome, the Palatine Hill (Figure 11.5). It was here that many of the events of his reign were played out, and here that he met his death. Hence its topography and architecture merit close study. Such a study is plagued by problems. The whole area was ravaged during the great fire of Nero's reign in AD 64; both Tacitus and Dio testify to the massive destruction on the Palatine at that time.⁵¹ The hill is today dominated by the huge palace complex of the Domus Augustana (or Augustiana), not built by Augustus but by Domitian after 80; another major palace, the Domus Tiberiana, hidden now under the

Farnese gardens, was similarly not built by Tiberius, but possibly by Claudius or more likely by Nero, and developed further by Domitian. That last emperor may also well have developed a huge area comprising another hidden section of the Palatine, under the Vigna Barberini to the north-east of the Domus Augustana.⁵² Two recent major publications, and a major review of them, have unfortunately not shed a definitive light on the history of the hill or its problems, since the conclusions of all three differ considerably.⁵³

Rising some 40 m to the south of the Forum Romanum, the modern Palatine gives the appearance of a level plateau, an impression created to a large extent by Domitian's monumental palace complex. In fact there are two distinct summits, still visible in Caligula's own day, the central and higher one being the Palatine, to the north and west of which lay the Germalus. Indeed, there is strictly speaking a second lesser slope, the Velia, connected with the Esquiline by a saddle through the forum. Although the whole group is loosely referred to as the Palatine (as in this book) it is clear from Varro that strictly speaking that term was used specifically of the main summit.⁵⁴ The location, especially its south-west corner, had close associations with Rome's earliest history, and was the original site of the ancient walled city. During the republic much of it became a prime residential area for distinguished Romans, such as Marcus Livius Drusus, plebeian tribune in 91 BC, the demagogue Clodius, his murderer Milo, and the orator and statesman Cicero. Mark Antony may also have owned a house there and Augustus was born there.⁵⁵ In probably the late 40s BC Augustus bought the relatively modest Palatine residence of the orator Hortensius. After 36, on the grounds that part of the house had been struck by lightning and was desired by the gods, Augustus dedicated the area to a new Temple of Apollo. Some have identified Augustus' residence with a late republican house excavated to the north-west of temple, on the grounds that the exposed house was organically linked to the Temple of Apollo to the east, so that together they formed a complex made up essentially of the house joined by a ramp to the temple.⁵⁶ In fact later studies have demonstrated that the excavated house was on a grand scale and was actually destroyed during the process of building the temple. Augustus was compensated financially for his generosity in providing the land for the Apollo complex and able to purchase and develop other residences. These became a 'palace' in the sense of a composite assemblage of residences, and, if we accept Wiseman's argument, were located in the very area where the Domus Augustana has preserved the name.⁵⁷ Although not a unitary structure, the complex did, however, have a single, grand entrance, where laurels and an oak crown were attached after the settlement in AD 27.⁵⁸ It also had a forecourt that was large enough to house a shrine of Vesta, and impressive enough to hold the body of Augustus as it lay in state before his funeral in AD 14.⁵⁹ The Palatine residence was soon recognised as a kind of 'official' imperial house, and already in the Augustan period 'Palatium', strictly speaking just any residence on the Palatine, had acquired the modern connotation of 'palace'.⁶⁰

The Temple of Apollo was dedicated in 28. The podium has survived, 44 m by 22 m, reached on the south side by a flight of steps. Excavation has confirmed

the literary testimony that it was built on the site of republican houses.⁶¹ The temple was enclosed by the magnificent portico of the Danaids, with statues of the fifty murderous daughters of Danaus. Along the western range of its portico were located the Greek and Latin libraries, rebuilt in the later Domitianic phase. Unfortunately, none of it has survived.⁶² Between the area of the Magna Mater–Victoria complex and the north slope above the forum, the Germalus was to be covered by the platform of a massive residential complex, some 15,000 m², the Domus Tiberiana. The area was buried by the Farnese gardens in the fifteenth century and systematic excavation has thus not been possible. The northern range has been the most intensively examined. From here, in particular, clear evidence has emerged, from tile stamps, that after 80 Domitian rebuilt the original Domus Tiberiana, as part of his own palace, and that Hadrian made further alterations.

A fundamental question to be asked is whether or not the palace that stood originally on the platform was built by Tiberius, as the name implies. This is of some importance for present purposes, because of the literary evidence that Caligula somehow extended Tiberius' palace. Tiberius was born on the Palatine, and lived there after becoming emperor. He clearly had a close and intimate association with the area. There are very good grounds for believing, however, that the construction of the massive palace that bears his name was not undertaken by him. The name itself, Domus Tiberiana, is actually used for the first time in the context of the assassination of Galba in 69, and may have arisen from the need for writers to distinguish this structure when the general term 'palatium' had been taken over by Domitian's great complex. Tiberius' personal aversion to extravagant architectural projects makes it unlikely that he would have undertaken a luxury project of this magnitude. Moreover, in Josephus' account of the assassination of Caligula it is clear that the imperial residence was still, in 41, made up of the accumulation of individual houses acquired by various members of the imperial family '... the imperial residence, though a unity, was made up severally of the buildings belonging to each one of those who had been born in the ruling power, named after those who had built them or even begun building any of the parts'.⁶³ Could this mean that Tiberius merely *began* work on the palace? Early studies inclined to the view that the Domus Tiberiana developed piecemeal from Tiberius on. An archaeological survey by the Swiss Institute in Rome has, however, concluded very emphatically against this idea, claiming that the geometric structure of the palace argues very strongly for its being the uniform concept of a single individual. An argument can be made that Claudius was responsible for it. When Nero was proclaimed emperor on Claudius' death in 54, Tacitus reports that the doors of the palace were dramatically flung open for him to emerge, and Suetonius says that he was proclaimed *pro gradibus palatii*, an allusion to the steps that would have been needed to make the podium accessible from the ground level. The building technique, a mixture of tile and travertine blocks, certainly suits a late Claudianic date. The structure of the podium may also be a model for the similar platform of the Temple of Claudius, begun after that emperor's death by Agrippina at the north-west corner of the Caelian Hill,

opposite the site of the Colosseum. Wiseman dates the master plan later, and suggests that both the overall plan of the Domus Augustana on the top of the hill and the large structure of the Domus Tiberiana were the brainchild of Nero. But whether the plan for the palace was Claudian or Neronian, in either case, it seems almost certain that Tiberius lived in the house of his father, rather than in a newly built palace. This may seem a modest arrangement, but the old Claudian residence was in fact very extensive, and seems to have covered a whole block (*insula*) in a central location on the Germalus. It was doubtless here that Caligula on May 27, AD 38, carried out sacrifices preserved in the Arval record 'in the open air, in the house which had belonged to his grandfather Tiberius Caesar'.⁶⁴

Could the Domus Tiberiana have been built by Caligula? His Palatine residence was certainly extensive. It held art treasures, was the setting for banquets and even, so it is reported, served as a brothel.⁶⁵ But Josephus' account argues strongly against a single, organically planned palace at this time. Also there is no reference to Caligula actually building a palace on the Palatine. His planned new residence is placed by Suetonius on the Capitoline, and on the Palatine Suetonius speaks merely of his *extending* the palace (the singular *palatium* could here be used collectively for a cluster of houses) as far as the forum. There are two developments to which he might have been referring. Along the northern edge of the hill, the platform of the Domus Tiberiana overlies republican houses. Excavation has shown that these were restored during the imperial period, and the mosaics in the pavements and walls suggest a post-Tiberian refurbishment. The restorations provide one possible context for Caligula's 'expansion' – the extending of the imperial property by buying up republican houses along the north range of the Germalus and updating them. The imperial complex would thus now spread through the house of Augustus and the Claudian block to the houses overlooking the forum on the west edge, exactly the kind of arrangement described by Josephus. Caligula also seems to have acquired property, the Domus Gelotiana, on the southern slope of the Palatine overlooking the Circus Maximus, from which he would order races down below in response to the appeals of his neighbours.⁶⁶

There is, however, another candidate for Caligula's expansion. In his description of the extension of the imperial property to the forum, Suetonius claims that Caligula turned the Temple of Castor (and Pollux) into a vestibule. Dio goes even further, saying that he cut the temple in two and made the approach to the palace run through it, to have Castor and Pollux as doorkeepers.⁶⁷ The Temple of Castor was located in the south-east corner of the Forum Romanum. It had been dedicated in 484 BC by the son of the dictator Aulus Postumius Albus to mark the appearance there before his father by the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux) after the battle of Lake Regillus (in 496 or 493). The temple underwent various restorations during the republic, then was completely rebuilt in the Augustan period in AD 6 (the building standing today), and dedicated by Tiberius in his and his brother's name.⁶⁸ It stood on a high podium, 49.5 m x 32 m, and consisted of an inner chamber (*cella*), an antechamber (*pronaos*) and a vestibule. In light of the comments of Suetonius and Dio it has been suggested that Caligula's extended 'palace' may

have moved beyond the Palatine into the proximity of the temple, into the area below the north-west corner of the Palatine between the forum and the north edge of the great granary complex built by Agrippa, the *Horrea Agrippiana*. This area, now lying beneath the Santa Maria complex, is not, of course, part of the Palatine, but the emphasis in Suetonius' expression *usque ad forum* ('right to the forum') does seem to suggest a structure that went beyond the Palatine proper.

The later history of this lower sector is fairly well known. Domitian established a complex here in alignment with the forum, converted later into the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, and the area has long been associated with the Temple of Augustus (see below). Systematic excavation was carried out in 1900–1 by Boni which brought to light pre-Domitianic structures, most notably what was identified as a pool (*piscina*), 25 m by 8 m, which is set within a room known now to have been 41 m x 23 m. The area was published by Delbrück twenty years later, showing that there was in fact no connection with the Temple of Augustus. Van Deman later published the site with the argument that the structure was part of the house of Caligula, a kind of extension of the palace above.⁶⁹ The discovery in the supposed *piscina* of a fragment of a marble tablet (perhaps from a statue base) with the legend in fine lettering [*ger*]MANICI F[*ilius*] ('son of Germanicus') reinforced the notion that the structure was Caligulan, but the fragment is unstratified and thus not probative. Work was later carried out by a joint British–Italian project between 1983 and 1989.⁷⁰ The excavations have revealed that east of the '*piscina*' was a large rectangular structure, which has been variously interpreted. None of the discoveries contradicts the Caligulan association. Sealed pottery and lamps associated with the construction of the large room seem to be mainly Augustan/Tiberian in character, which is certainly compatible with a Caligulan construction. The main entrance might have come from the north, where the Temple of Castor and Pollux was located: the central axis of the temple passes through the mid-point of the large structure and a door could have been cut through the rear of the temple to allow access to a bridge that would have led to the residence. But this can be only speculative since later Domitianic construction has removed any evidence that there might have been for any such arrangement. Dio's comment, if it is to be taken at all seriously, that Claudius later 'restored their temple to Castor and Pollux', does seem to imply that the temple had somehow previously been incorporated into the structure.⁷¹

Suetonius tells us that Caligula also laid foundations for a new house on the Capitol, and built a bridge from the Palatine to connect with it. A planned palace on the Capitol in association with the Temple of Jupiter is certainly not to be ruled out, since it would to some extent parallel Augustus' palace–temple complex on the Palatine. The bridge is a different matter. The distance to be spanned would be about 250 m, at its highest point some 30 m above the ground, and the whole idea should perhaps be dismissed as fantasy, prompted possibly by another jocular remark of Caligula's. The topic is introduced by Suetonius not as part of Caligula's building programme but rather in the context of his insane conversations with the gods. At any rate, none of it has survived. The notion, though curious, does

receive some support from Pliny's observation that the city had been ringed by Caligula's houses; the great Italian archaeologist, Lugli, took the idea seriously, suggesting that the bridge might have been built of wood.⁷²

One of the most important events of the early months of Caligula's reign was the symbol-laden dedication of the Temple of Augustus.⁷³ Building had begun under Tiberius and it seems to have reached a fairly advanced stage by the time he died, enough for it to be completed and dedicated by Caligula by the end of August 37 (the occasion is dealt with in [Chapter 4](#)).⁷⁴ Perhaps the most useful aspect of Suetonius' strange story about the bridge is that it is said to have arched over the temple, and thus provides a general location for it. The archaeological remains are scanty but Lugli concluded that the temple did in fact stand in the depression between the Capitoline and the Palatine, immediately behind the Basilica Julia.⁷⁵

To mark the dedication of the Temple of Augustus, whose design seems to have been inspired by the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, Caligula issued a striking sestertius, whose reverse depicts a sacrifice taking place in front of a temple ([Figure 4.12](#); *RIC* 1² 111).⁷⁶ In the foreground is a veiled figure in a toga, presumably Caligula himself, sacrificing at a garlanded altar, with a dish in his right hand. Behind him an attendant with an axe in his belt is leading a bull to the altar, while a second attendant holds a dish. The temple is identified by the inscription *DIVO AUG(USTO)*. It has six columns, Ionic with Corinthian elements, with festoons hanging across the front. There are various figures on the pediment; the central one holds a *patera* and possibly a sceptre, and may be Divus Augustus. On the left edge is a figure variously identified as Mars or Romulus, and on the right a group consisting of Aeneas, Ascanius and Anchises. The temple was restored by Antoninus Pius in 158/9 and is depicted on his coins, showing that by this later date it now has a range of eight columns of the Corinthian order ([Figure 11.6](#)).⁷⁷



Figure 11.6 Antoninus Pius reverse of denarius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

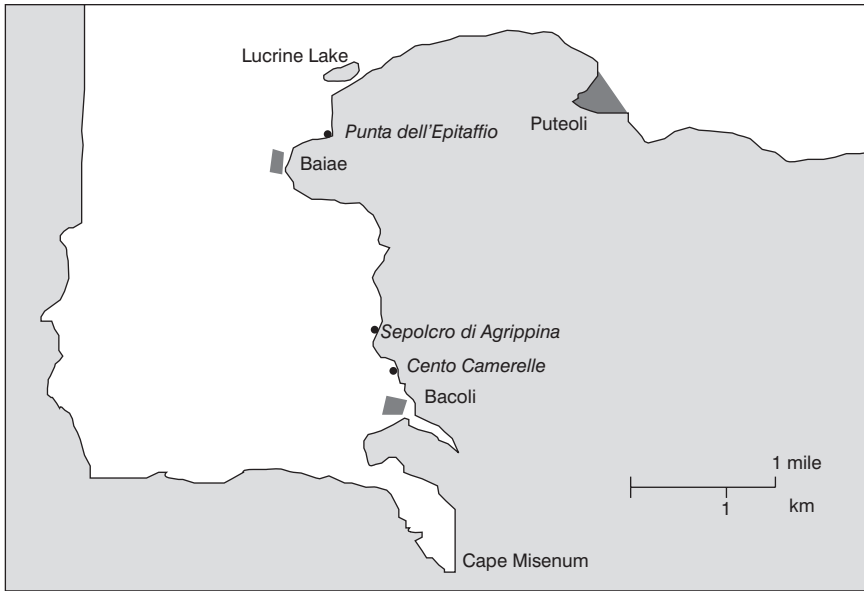


Figure 11.7 The Baiae area

One of the most notorious incidents of Caligula's reign, and perhaps the most striking example of his wasteful extravagance, was the construction of the bridge of boats across part of the Bay of Naples. Its eastern end was located at Puteoli (Pozzuoli). This a major port with a central role in the transportation from Egypt both of grain and obelisks to Italy, and as a lasting memorial Augustus permanently stationed in its docks (*navalia*) the first ship to bring one of these monuments to Italy. It later burned down. The harbour was protected by an extensive mole, usually ascribed by modern scholars to Augustus, and Seneca describes how a popular pastime at Puteoli was to stand on it and watch the arrival of grain ships from Alexandria. Caligula's bridge presumably extended out from this mole, which later generations have called the Ponte di Caligola.⁷⁸ The western end cannot be located so precisely, but seems to have been in the vicinity of Baiae (see [Appendix](#)). The occasion is impossible to date with certainty. Dio places it in 39, in the general context of events preceding Caligula's departure for Germany and Gaul. This is certainly plausible but it must be noted that Dio does not relate the episode very closely to what is described before or after, and he may not have known when it occurred, but simply have inserted it at this point for convenience.⁷⁹

A very vivid description of the whole episode is provided in Dio and Suetonius, and further information is provided by Seneca and Josephus.⁸⁰ Boats needed for the construction were built on the spot, but, since they did not suffice, others had to be brought in from other stations, in such numbers that it supposedly caused food shortages in Rome.⁸¹ The boats were anchored in a double line, and earth was then heaped on them. In Dio's account the bridge was more than a mere passage

and had resting places located along its course with fresh drinking water. On the first day Caligula donned what he claimed was the breastplate of Alexander, which had been taken from his sarcophagus in Alexandria, putting it over a purple cloak decorated with gold and gems.⁸² Wearing an oak garland, and decked out with sword and shield, he sacrificed to a number of gods, including Neptune and Envy, and entered the structure at the Baiae end, charging at full tilt with a train of infantry and cavalry, identified specifically as praetorians by Suetonius. Suetonius also has him moving back and forth for two days, while Dio says that he waited in Puteoli until the second day, before returning in splendid style.

Both main sources indicate that the real spectacle was reserved for the second day. On this occasion Caligula was pulled by a team of victorious racehorses followed by a train of 'spoils' and hostages, including Darius, son of Artabanus, King of Parthia. He had an enormous retinue, beginning with friends and associates in garlanded robes, followed by the praetorians, then the general public, in whatever attire each individual might choose. Dio says that Caligula enjoyed calm seas, prompting him to suggest that Neptune was afraid of him. At the centre of the bridge he climbed onto a platform and harangued the crowd. He contrasted his great exploit with the famous crossings of Darius in about 512 BC (Bosphorus) and Xerxes in 480 BC (Hellespont) and pointed to the fact that he had bridged a much wider expanse of water than they had done. He congratulated the troops, who had undergone great hardships and perils (they may have been involved in its construction), then distributed money and ordered a celebration, which lasted the rest of the day and through the night, both on the bridge and on boats anchored nearby. The whole event was lit by torches on the structure and in the surrounding mountains. Many of the attendant circumstances are reminiscent of a Roman triumph. As the party progressed it inevitably got out of hand. People were invited from the shore to join in, and during the drunken revelry some were thrown into the sea, and then seem to have become caught up in mock sea battles. A number of people were drowned, but the casualties were kept to a minimum because the sea was exceptionally calm during the whole period.

What were Caligula's motives in building the bridge?⁸³ Josephus and Seneca cite it as an example of madness. Josephus says that he found it tedious to cross the bay in a trireme, and also that it was his privilege as lord of the water to ride across it in a chariot, while Seneca sees it as in imitation of Xerxes, for which Caligula squandered his resources, even though there was only seven days' food left in the city; Dio notes a desire to drive a chariot over the sea; Suetonius, who places the event among the acts of the 'princeps' rather than of the 'monster', and thus omits some of the more extravagant details found in Dio, provides three theories: to outdo Xerxes, whose bridging of the Hellespont was such a celebrated event; to inspire fear among the Britons and Germans; or (the story that his grandfather picked up) to confound the predictions of the court astrologer Thrasyllus, that Caligula had no more chance of becoming emperor than of riding over the gulf of Baiae, a rather pointless and unduly costly demonstration by this stage in his principate, one would have thought. Suetonius specifically states that this

explanation was leaked by a confidante of Caligula, and it may well originate from some wry and humorous comments made after the event. Modern scholarship has added various other motives, such as a determination to celebrate a triumph on his own terms, or to imitate Alexander the Great, or Pompey the Great.⁸⁴ But it is hazardous to seek the truth by plucking out from the sources individual claims that may themselves be little more than speculation. Some or all of these motivations could well have co-existed. Caligula could well have been stung by an earlier prediction of Thrasyllus, have wanted to emulate Alexander, Xerxes or even one of the gods, or to display his power in the eyes of potential foes; some or all of these thoughts could have entered his head.⁸⁵ We shall probably never know precisely what triggered Caligula to engage in what now seems sheer folly, and perhaps there was no clearly identifiable impulse. It could very well be that the utterly pointless extravagance of the venture was in fact the whole point, and that its apparent pointlessness in itself conveyed a serious and deliberate message.⁸⁶ Caligula would not have been the first autocratic ruler to seek to prove his autocratic manhood by some sort of grandiose construction, witness Versailles, or the Summer Palace in Peking.⁸⁷ Suetonius' grandfather may have come closest to the truth. After Baiae, and the demonstration that he had the authority and the resources to indulge himself on such a massive scale, Caligula could be fully confident that no one was left in doubt about who was in control.

Appendix: the location of the bridge

The ancient sources are in disagreement about the location of the bridge: Dio 59.17.1 says that it stretched from Puteoli to Bauli, Jos. *AJ*. 19.5 from Dicaearchia (Puteoli) to Misenum, Suet. *Cal.* 19.1 from Puteoli to Baiae.

There is thus a consensus about Puteoli, and that end of the structure seems secure enough.

The other end is more complex. The manuscripts of Suetonius are corrupt at this point, reading *nam Baiarum medium intervallum Puteolanas moles* which makes no sense but does seem to point to Baiae as the location (*inter Baulos et* has been conjectured for *intervallum*). Dio explicitly states that it was Bauli, but there is no consensus on where Bauli was located: see Hülsen 1897. Piny, who had spent time at Misenum as a naval commander, in one passage (*NH* 9.172) describes Bauli as being *in parte Baiana* (in the general region of Baiae, but not identical), and in another (*NH* 3.61) he sets it in a list of Campanian sites as a separate location. Tac. *Ann.* 14.4.3–4 identifies Bauli as the name of a villa between Misenum and Baianus lacus (Lucrine Lake?). Modern scholars are in no greater agreement: Maurer 1949: 93 places it at the modern Punta del epitaffio, some 4 km north-east of Misenum; but Cicero (*Acad.* 2.80) says that Puteoli was visible from Hortensius' villa Bauli – this does not work for Punta del Epitaffio; Maiuri 1941: 254; D'Arms 1970: 181; Katzoff 1973: 73–5 support the Cento Camerelle just north of Misenum; Bicknell 1963: 261; Lindsay 1993: 94 support modern Bacoli, about midway between Misenum and Baiae.

Josephus gives the length of the bridge as thirty stades (at *AJ* 18.249, however, he gives the grossly underestimated figure that Puteoli was five stades from Baiae). Suetonius gives the length as 3.6 Roman miles (about 3.3 miles); Dio has twenty-six stades and since he uses a system of 7.5 stades to the Roman mile, this produces a distance of about 3.15 miles. The actual direct distance from Puteoli to Bacoli is 2.25 miles. Balsdon 1934b: 51 suggests a confusion between the distances by land and by sea.

Notes

- 1 Suet. *Aug.* 28.3.
- 2 Jos. *AJ* 19.7–8; Pliny *NH* 35.18; Suet. *Cal.* 22.2, 57.1; Dio 59.28.3.
- 3 Pausanias 9.27.3; Millar 1992: 145–6.
- 4 Philo *Leg.* 349–67.
- 5 Suet. *Cal.* 37–3; Hurley 2011: 25 notes that at Suet. *Jul.* 44.3 Julius Caesar is said to have similarly planned ‘almost legendary impossible tasks’. Jos. *AJ* 19.205, on the other hand, asserts that the harbour at Rhegium was his only major construction.
- 6 Tac. *Ann.* 3.31.7; Suet. *Aug.* 37; Dio 54.8.4, 59.15.3.
- 7 Dio 59.15.4 combines these apparently separate issues into a single charge. Rogers 1935: 57–8 says that those who had a balance remaining at the end of the year would have been found guilty under the *Lex Iulia de Residuis*.
- 8 Dio 59.15.3–5, 60.17.2.
- 9 Suet. *Cal.* 21; Pliny *NH* 4.10; Periander: Diog. Laert. 1.7(99); Nero: Suet. *Ner.* 19.2.
- 10 D’Ercé 1966: 89–96. The tower’s name of ‘The Old Man’ in the Middle Ages is a corruption of the Celtic Alt Maen (‘High Stone’). Reddé 1986: 274 doubts that the familiar Boulogne tower is the one originally constructed under Caligula/Claudius.
- 11 Suet. *Cal.* 21, 37.3. See Willrich 1903: 301; Howald and Meyer 1940: 196–7, no. 377; Stähelin 1948: 163–4; Walser 1980: 443, n. 25.
- 12 Suet. *Vesp.* 5.3; Dio 59.12.3; Spain: *CIL* II. 4716, 4639, 6233–4.
- 13 Front. *Aq.* 1.13; Pliny *NH* 36.122. Suet. *Cal.* 21 refers to only one, in the region near Tibur (the Aqua Claudia).
- 14 Tac. *Ann.* 11.13.2. On the dating problems associated with the completion under Claudius, see Malloch 2013: 214–16; *ILS* 218 (Porta Praenestina) records breakdowns in the Aqua Claudia in 71 and 81.
- 15 Sen. *Brev.* 20.3; Seneca calls him ‘Sextus’; Tac. *Ann.* 1.7.3, 11.31.1.
- 16 Tac. *Ann.* 6.13.1–2; Sen. *Brev.* 18.5; Suet. *Cal.* 26.5, 39.1; Dio 59.17.2. The story is reflected also in Aur. Vic. *Caes.* 4.3.
- 17 Winterling 2011: 126–7 places the bridge in AD 40, after Caligula’s return from the north; Wardle 2007 challenges this dating.
- 18 Dio 60.11.3; Rickman 1980: 74; see Garnsey 1988: 222–3.
- 19 Jos. *AJ* 19.205; Willrich’s 1903: 420 suggests that it was intended for emergencies, but this is difficult to reconcile with the scale of the project.
- 20 Repairs to an aqueduct are recorded by Claudius, whose name is accompanied in the dedicatory inscription by another fragmentary name of a ‘Germanicus Caesar Augustus’, who must surely be Caligula. His benefaction presumably preceded Claudius’ (Buckler and Robinson 1932: 7.11.1).
- 21 The Caligulan date for the construction at Attaleia is based on the restoration of a dedicatory inscription that might show work undertaken by the legate Titus Helvius Basila under both Tiberius and Caligula: Şahin 1995.
- 22 Caligula visited Syracuse after the death of Drusilla (Suet. *Cal.* 24.2) and at some point organised *astici ludi*, games originally performed in Athens in honour of Dionysus (Suet. *Cal.* 20).

- 23 Bologna: *ILS* 5674; Antioch: Malalas 10.313–14.
- 24 The improvements to the Tullianum, Rome's oldest surviving prison, have often been attributed to Caligula's reign. An inscription shows that the work was completed in the consulships of Gaius Vibius Rufinus and Marcus Cocceius Nerva, once thought to have been in office between AD 39 and 41. Syme 1981a has argued that their consulships in fact fell in AD 21 or 22; Tortoriello 2004: 619 accepts Syme's dating.
- 25 Tac. *Ann.* 3.72.2; Suet. *Cal.* 21; Dio 60.6.8–9.
- 26 *ILS* 205 (Smallwood 308b); there is no actual evidence that the amphitheatre and the damage to the arch are connected; Suet. *Cal.* 21; Dio 59.10.5; Palombi 1993; Gatti 1999.
- 27 *CIL* VI 37834, 33953, see also 10048, 10052, 10056–57, 10067; Dio 59.14.6; Hülsen 1903: 375–6; Richardson 1992: 180; Tomei 2004. Liverani 1999: 32–34 suggests that the name was associated with Caligula by a false etymology and may refer to a shrine of Gaia.
- 28 Lanciani 1896, followed by Buzzetti 1968; Hülsen 1903 thinks they might belong to a naumachia (mock naval battle) structure.
- 29 Suet. *Cal.* 54.1.
- 30 The major publications are by Castagnoli 1960 and Magi 1972–3; see also Humphrey 1986: 545–52; Richardson 1992: 83–4; Liverani 1999: 21–28, 131; 2004; Coarelli 2007: 355–6; 2008–9.
- 31 Plin. *NH* 16.201, 36.74 (with name); Suet. *Claud.* 21.2.
- 32 For a summary of Constantine's St Peter's see Miller 2009: 25–50.
- 33 Iversen 1968: 19–46; Alföldi 1990; D'Onofrio 1992; Zadro 2007; Zietsman 2009: 4–5.
- 34 *CIL* VI.882; the letters are partially erased; Iversen 1965.
- 35 On the basis of the position of the inscriptions, which could not have been seen by most of the spectators to the north and south, D'Onofrio 1992 assumes a north–south orientation of the circus, which, in view of the local topography, seems impossible. Townend 1958 suggested that there were no walls, and that the obelisk was simply placed in Caligula's gardens, with at most wooden structures added by Claudius or Nero.
- 36 *AE*. 1945:136.
- 37 Liverani 1999, 2004; Coarelli 2007.
- 38 Humphrey 1983: 124, 552.
- 39 Claudius: Suet. *Claud.* 21.2; Nero: Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.
- 40 Tac. *Ann.* 14.14.4, 15.44.7; Suet. *Claud.* 21.3, *Nero* 22.2; *SHA* *Eleg.* 23.1.
- 41 Suet. *Claud.* 20.3; Pliny *NH* 36.70; see Testaguzza 1964; 1970: 109, 116–19. Precise dimensions are impossible because of the uncertainty over the identification of the stern and starboard sides; Casson 1995: 188–9 calculates that 800–900 tons of lentils would have been needed.
- 42 Suet. *Cal.* 21; Willrich 1903: 421. Inscriptions from Samos (*IGR* 4.981, 1721) refer to Caligula; Woods 2012: 462–7 suggests that there was no palace of Polycrates on Samos and that the connection was made to cast Caligula as an archetypal tyrant, in that, like Polycrates, he came to power by killing a 'brother'. The failure of archaeologists to find the ruins of the palace, whose location is in any case unknown, should perhaps not be given undue weight. Suetonius certainly believed that there was a palace on the island.
- 43 Suet. *Cal.* 37.2; see Hockman 1997.
- 44 The classic account is Ucelli 1950; see also Rubin de Cervin 1955. The most recent work is Bonino 1989, 2003, 2012. For a recent popular account: Carlson 2002.
- 45 Pipes: *ILS* 8676; Ucelli 1950: 343–4; there is also evidence that at least one brick stamp bore Caligula's name (Ucelli 1950: 344). On the mosaics: Sear 1977: 25, 73; Strocka 1984: 135, n. 4.

- 46 Manacorda 1979: 28, 29 illustrates dated plaques of the Caligulan period with imitation spiral-fluted columns, presupposing architectural archetypes.
- 47 Sen. *Ep.* 76; Rabbeno 1953 sees a specific, but prudently hidden, reference to the Nemi boats in Seneca's comment.
- 48 Pliny *NH* 36.111.
- 49 Suet. *Cal.* 23.2.
- 50 Horti Lamiani: *CIL* VI 8668; Suet. *Cal.* 59; Cima di Puolo 1996; Horti Maecenatis: Hor. *Sat.* 1.8.14; Dio 55.7.5; Häuber 1996. On the remains of the supposed throne, see Cimma and La Rocca 1986.
- 51 Tac. *Ann.* 15.39.1; Dio 62.18.2.
- 52 The Vigna Barberini was excavated by the École Française de Rome, 1985–9, and a palatial Domitianic structure has been identified; for a useful summary: André, Villedieu and Gros 2004.
- 53 Carandini 2012; Coarelli 2012; Wiseman 2013a.
- 54 Varro *LL.* 5.54.
- 55 Suet. *Aug.* 5.1
- 56 Carettoni 1956–7; 1983: 7–16; Zanker 1983: 24; Carandini 2012: 228; Coarelli 2012: 371–95; reservations: Wiseman 2013a: 256–57; destruction of house: Iacopi and Tedone 2006.
- 57 Vell. 2.81.3; Suet. *Aug.* 29.3, 57.2; Dio 49.15.5; house of Hortensius: Suet. *Aug.* 72.1. Domus Augustana: Wiseman 2013a: 255; 2013b: 102–3.
- 58 Aug. *RG* 34.2; Dio 53.16.4.
- 59 Vesta: Ovid *Fast.* 4.950; body: Suet. *Aug.* 100.2.
- 60 Ovid *Met.* 1.175–6; Dio 56.13.5
- 61 Vell. 2.81.3; Dio 49.15.5.
- 62 Ovid *AA* 1.73–4; Propertius 2.31.
- 63 Jos. *AJ* 19.117 (Wiseman's translation). Name: Tac. *Hist.* 1.27.2; Plut. *Galb.* 24.4. Plutarch qualifies his identification with the note that the palace was called the palace of Tiberius, which implies that it was not built by him.
- 64 *AEI* 12c.40; Cic. *Cael.* 17; Tac. *Ann.* 12.69.1; Suet. *Nero* 8; Wiseman 2013a: 262–3; 2013b: 102–3; on the architectural concept of the Domus Tiberiana, see Krause and Willers 1986, 1994, 1995; on the Claudian *insula*, Tamm 1963: 30–31.
- 65 Suet. *Cal.* 41.1, 54.2; Dio 59.28.9 (see [Chapter 14](#)).
- 66 Germalus: Suet. *Cal.* 22.2; Capitoline: Suet. *Cal.* 22.4; Domus Gelotiana: *CIL* VI.8663; Suet. *Cal.* 18.3; *CIL* 11.3805.5 for the imperial freedman Gaius Iulius assigned to the Domus Gelotiana (AD 26).
- 67 Suet. *Cal.* 22.2; Dio 59.28.5.
- 68 Ovid *Fast.* 1.705–8; Suet. *Tib.* 20; Dio 55.27.4.
- 69 Delbrück 1921; Van Deman 1924; Lugli 1946: 481, 484.
- 70 Hurst 1988; 1995; 2013: 71–73; the final interpretation of this building is still in process (H. Hurst in correspondence); see also Tamm 1964; Fishwick 1992: 252.
- 71 Dio 60.6.8. Sen. *Polyb.* 16.5 seems to suggest that some houses were entered through temples, although his allusion could be specifically to the house of Augustus, if linked to the Temple of Apollo. See Wiseman 1980: 169; 1987a: 4; 1987b: 406–7 for the possibility that the entrance to the Palatine complex involved the use of the triumphal arch erected in honour of Octavian between the Temples of Castor and Pollux and of Divius Julius.
- 72 Pliny *NH* 36.111; Suet. *Cal.* 22.4; cf. Dio 59.28.2; Lugli 1946: 187; it is accepted by Adams 2007: 192.
- 73 On the actual temple, see Hänlein-Schäfer 1985; Torelli 1993.
- 74 The sources disagree on who actually finished the Temple. Tac. *Ann.* 6.45.2 says that Tiberius completed the construction but did not get around to the actual dedication;

- Suet. *Tib.* 47, *Cal.* 21 says explicitly that it was unfinished under Tiberius; Dio 57.10.2 is ambiguous.
- 75 Lugli 1941; 1946: 185. Pliny the Elder (*NH* 12.94) does speak of a *templum* to Augustus on the Palatine dedicated to Augustus by Livia, where he himself had seen a giant cinnamon root placed in a dish of gold, from which drops would distil annually, congealing in hard grains. It was destroyed in a fire. He may have been using *templum* loosely of the shrine to Augustus in the house of Augustus, referred to by Suetonius as a *sacrarium* (Suet. *Aug.* 5.10). Fishwick 1992: 245–55 suggests that Pliny's reference was to the Temple of Augustus in the region technically below the Palatine, which could be defined as the Palatine after Caligula's extensions to the imperial residence.
 - 76 On the model of Jupiter Capitolinus, see Fishwick 1992: 235–45.
 - 77 *RIC*² 1.36; Richmond 1913 suggests that Caligula's coin depicts the Temple of Apollo; Antoninus: *RIC* 3.124, 143–4, 272, 284, 305^a, 755, 787, 795–6, 829, 870, 973, 978, 994, 998, 1013, 1017, 1040. Hill 1979: 207; Fishwick 1992: 234 suggest that the temple on Antoninus' coins represents a Domitianic restoration, after the fire of 80.
 - 78 Sen. *Ep.* 77.1; Plin. *NH* 69–70.
 - 79 AD 39 is the date generally favoured: Willrich 1903: 419; Balsdon 1934b: 50–4; Garnsey 1988: 222–3; Lindsay 1993: 94; Hurley 1993: 73; Kleijwegt 1994: 665–7; Wardle 1994: 190; 2007; Malloch 2001a: 214, n. 45. AD 40: Winterling 2011: 127.
 - 80 Sen. *Brev. Vit.* 18.5; Jos. *AJ* 19.5–6; Suet. *Cal.* 19; Dio 59.17; Aur. Vict. *Epit.* 3.9. Freyburger-Galland 2009: 157–8 speculates that Dio might have seen Suetonius' account and amplified and corrected it.
 - 81 Dio 59.17.2; the shortage is also mentioned in Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 4.4; Seneca cites the bridge as an example of Caligula's negligence and notes food shortages in AD 41. But he does not suggest a direct link between the two: see Garnsey 1988: 222–3.
 - 82 Suet. *Cal.* 52. Alexander served as the obvious model for successful generals of the late republic and early empire, such as Pompey, Julius Caesar, Antony, Augustus and Germanicus (Balsdon 1936: 159–160. Weinstock 1971: 38, 335 says that a similar story about Pompey, that he wore the purple cloak of Alexander in the triumph of 61 BC, was fabricated by his enemies to discredit him.
 - 83 Summaries: Guastella 1992: 146–52; Hurley 1993: 74–5; Wardle 1994: 194–6.
 - 84 Triumph: Kleijwegt 1994; Alexander the Great: Malloch 2001a; Pompey: Woods 2006–7; Guastella 1990 says that Caligula wanted to go 'beyond the impossible' (*oltre l'impossibile*), showing Thrasyllus to be wrong and outdoing Xerxes; Speidel 1994 accepts the notion that the bridge was intended to overawe the Britons and Germans; Woods 2002 suggests that the bridge was a trial run for a scheme to bridge the Channel.
 - 85 It has even been suggested that the bridge involved some kind of military defence or even a mole – we know that Caligula undertook a harbour near Rhegium and a canal through the Isthmus of Corinth, and he may have undertaken similar work in the Bay of Naples; see Savile 1941: 228; Franciscis 1967: 215.
 - 86 Ferrill 1991: 117 by contrast concluded that building the bridge had no ultimate purpose and was just another 'whimsical vanity' of a crazy man.
 - 87 Caligula's primary target would have been the senators, but he may also have been taking the simple satisfaction of proving his power to himself; Wiedemann 1996: 225 suggests an element of the struggle between man and nature.

ASSASSINATION

Domitian once famously observed that no one believed emperors when they complained about conspiracies, until the final one. Domitian was certainly not alone; to a greater or lesser degree all the early Roman emperors were dogged by the fear of plots.¹ Caligula was no exception, and after his return from the north, where he had faced hostile Germans and perhaps anticipated facing hostile Britons, he was now obsessed by the threat posed by hostile Romans. He was once again in the vicinity of Rome by the end of May 40, although he seems to have lingered outside the city limits and delayed his official entry into Rome proper until the end of August, when he celebrated his ovation.² It was possibly not very long after his return that the Jewish embassy from Alexandria, led by Philo, first met him, in his mother's gardens by the Vatican Hill (also outside the city limits).³ If so, whatever setbacks the emperor may have encountered in the previous months, he seems to have been in an affable mood on this occasion. He greeted the delegation amiably and promised to meet them when he had the time. We should not take this as a hollow excuse. Considerable public business would have accumulated while the emperor was in the north, and apart from the Alexandrians there were several other foreign rulers and embassies awaiting him. At some point after this he seems to have moved south to Campania, travelling from one villa to another. If he hoped to escape from the tedium of meeting foreign deputations, he was to be disappointed. It was almost certainly in this summer that Herod Antipas, tetrarch of part of his late father's (Herod the Great's) dominion, and his wife Herodias (sister of Herod Agrippa) made their journey to see Caligula, lured by the prospect of Antipas being granted the title of king (see [Chapter 10](#)).⁴ Philo's deputation made a second, presumably unsuccessful, attempt to meet Caligula while he was in Campania, and it was there that they heard the devastating news that Caligula had ordered his own statue to be placed within the temple at Jerusalem ([Chapter 10](#)).

Caligula finally entered Rome on August 31 to celebrate his ovation. In timing the event for his birthday he was following precedent. Pompey similarly delayed his triumph in 61 BC for his victories in the east until his birthday, as, apparently, did Messalla Corvinus for his victories in Gaul in 27 BC.⁵ While the symbolic association between the two events would have weighed heavily with

him, Caligula's absence up to this point may well have been dictated as much by a fear of assassination as by the preparations for the ovation. The activities of Gaetulicus and Lepidus would have made him deeply suspicious of the senate, and this no doubt aggravated his autocratic tendencies, and it is to be remembered that he had declared that he was returning to Rome to the equestrians and the people, not to the senate (Chapter 8). He may have decided to foster his popularity with ordinary Romans as a protection against a perceived growing threat from the nobility, although ironically the elections previously restored to them reverted about now to the senate (Chapter 14).⁶ But Caligula probably appreciated that the Roman people as a whole were not too concerned about abstract political gains that had little political importance. He understood the importance of more concrete demonstrations of his favour, and accordingly ordered that gold and silver be showered from the roof of the palace for several days in succession. Many people in the crowd were injured in the crush to collect them, and Dio adds the malicious rumour that they were killed by pieces of iron that the emperor tossed down with the coins. The calendar of Philocalus of 354 records that in the rush 32 men and 247 women died, as well as one eunuch.⁷

In the event, Caligula did meet his death as the result of a conspiracy, and it could be said that his persistent fears were vindicated, although it could also be said that it was an outcome that he himself had provoked.⁸ He had probably first felt threatened after his illness in 37 by a group centred around Macro and Gemellus. The second major unrest, on which Winterling places much emphasis, may have arisen among disaffected senators early in 39, and later in the same year he was faced by some kind of threat from Lepidus, perhaps in concert with Gaetulicus.⁹ All of these 'conspiracies' are shrouded in obscurity, and, given the nature of conspiracies, this is hardly surprising. The plots against Caligula in the last six months are better documented, and his final days are among the best documented episodes of classical antiquity. But they also ironically constitute one of the least understood episodes, and the precise nature and the true motives of the participants still largely elude us.¹⁰ Part of the difficulty is that we look for political explanation and political motivations, but the sources are often more interested in the moral dimension, especially in the inevitable penalty paid by the stereotypical tyrant.¹¹ Generally two separate phases of conspiratorial activity are identified by the sources, one dated loosely to late 40, the other culminating in January 41.¹² They may reflect two separate movements, but they could equally well be phases of a single process. A political conspiracy, unlike a straightforward military coup, can be a complex event, and may involve individuals with disparate aims and ambitions, united only by the common determination to be rid of a particular ruler. The more widespread the dissatisfaction, the greater the number of individuals likely to be involved: as an extreme example, sixty conspirators were supposedly working for the assassination of Julius Caesar. In such a large operation, there are likely to be sub-groups, and the distinction between disparate conspirators working to a common end and a single conspiracy containing many strands will not always be a clear-cut one.¹³ This phenomenon might help to explain an

apparent contradiction in our sources. Both Dio and Josephus emphasise that the final conspiracy was widely known. Yet this information seems to be contradicted by Tacitus, who speaks of a secret plot (*occultae insidiae*), implying that it succeeded because of the very fact that it was secret. These two notions can be reconciled if we think in terms of a conspiracy that attracted a wide range of diverse interests and whose inner group retained their secrecy, even though Caligula managed to catch a number of people on the fringe. Josephus does indeed comment that many of the conspirators were operating *allelon agnoia* ('in ignorance of one-another').¹⁴

The obsessive fear of a major conspiracy might to some degree account for the apparently ruthless behaviour of Caligula in the final six months of his life. Seneca, in particular, provides horrific descriptions of his brutality, especially towards senators, of how he scourged them to death, tortured them by fire and the rack, gagged their mouths with sponges to prevent them from crying out, beheaded them, and even executed them in the evening because he was too impatient to wait until the next day. But when the texts are examined carefully, relatively few specific details or names emerge. Three of the cases as transmitted in the sources involve what seem to be variants on one of the conventional behaviour traits of the tyrant, who traditionally adds refinement to his cruelty by executing a son in the presence of his father, or even executes them together. Similar stories were told about Augustus.¹⁵

One of these father-son stories episodes involves a certain Pastor, who is otherwise unknown. Seneca is our only source. He claims that Caligula decided to execute Pastor's son because of the youth's foppish manners and elaborate hairstyle. When Pastor begged for his son's life, the emperor had the lad executed at once and that same evening invited the old man to a banquet, giving him perfume and garlands, proposing his health and keeping watch to make sure that he drank the wine. Pastor did so, we are told, because he had another son, and feared what might happen to that boy too.¹⁶

The second case, that of Sextus Papinius, is much confused in Dio's account. Under 40 he tells us that Papinius and his 'father' Anicius Cerialis were both discovered in a conspiracy and tortured by Caligula, and that Cerialis maintained his silence, while his son Papinius was induced to speak by the promise of a pardon. On the testimony of the son, according to Dio, Cerialis and others were executed in his presence.¹⁷ Dio is almost certainly in error here. Seneca gives us a quite different report. He claims that it was Papinius, son of an unnamed consular, who was tortured to death by Caligula, for amusement.¹⁸ He says nothing of his being betrayed by another accuser. More importantly Tacitus reveals that Anicius Cerialis did not die under Caligula. He reports that Anicius was forced to commit suicide nearly thirty years later, in AD 66, on suspicion of disloyalty to Nero, and states that the evidence on which the charge was based may well have been forged, but that the case aroused little sympathy because he had earlier betrayed a conspiracy to Caligula. Anicius Cerialis certainly had a record of sycophantic collaboration under Nero. As suffect consul, he proposed in 65 the erection of a temple to Divus Nero.¹⁹ It seems probable that under Caligula he betrayed some

of the conspirators, including Papinius, and that Dio confused the story, with the added touch of the murder of the father before his son.²⁰

The last group involves the fate of Betilienus Bassus, a quaestor, and his father, the procurator Betilienus Capito. Both Seneca and Dio imply that their deaths belong to the same occasion as that of Papinius. It is tempting to conclude that these men too might have been betrayed by Anicius Cerialis.²¹ Dio adds the detail that Capito was forced to be present at his son Bassus' execution, although not personally guilty of any crime. When Capito asked to be allowed to close his eyes Caligula ordered him slain also; in an attempt to save his own life Capito now offered to disclose the names of others. Dio implies very strongly that the people identified by him were in fact involved in a conspiracy, namely the Prefects of the guard and the powerful freedman Callistus, and that these might have come to a sticky end had not Capito gone too far and added Caligula's wife Caesonia to the list!

Among the others implicated in the 'early' phase of the final conspiracy was Julius Canus, a Stoic philosopher.²² The Stoics adhered to a creed that stressed the paramouncy of nature and a rational life lived in accordance with that nature. They did concede the necessity of order and structure in society, and found an accommodation with the notion of monarchy, provided the ruler was enlightened. Under the Julio-Claudians (especially Nero), the Stoics became the focal point of courageous opposition to emperors they considered had betrayed the trust reposed in them. Seneca hints at Stoic opposition in the pre-Neronian period, but Canus is the first identifiable example of what was to become a familiar type on the imperial scene.²³ According to Seneca he had a long quarrel with Caligula, and presumably got the better of him. As he was leaving, the emperor told him not to be too pleased with himself, as he had ordered him executed, to which Canus is said to have replied, 'Thank-you, excellent prince', a *bon mot* which impressed Seneca but whose precise significance eluded him. Seneca clearly implies that the death penalty came about on a whim of Caligula, but it is worth noting that an interval of ten days elapsed between verdict and execution, which happened to be the statutory period between sentence and execution in senatorial trials. It is thus very possible that Canus was actually convicted by the senate.²⁴ Seneca adds that as Canus went to his death he was accompanied by 'his philosopher' (*suus philosophus*), whom the Byzantine chronicler Syncellus identifies as Antiochus of Seleucia, otherwise unknown.²⁵ Canus is said to have foretold to him that within three days of his death another philosopher, Rectus, would die, and that this did in fact come to pass (nothing further is known of Rectus, but see on Regulus, below).²⁶

Another senator to die was Julius Graecinus, father of the Agricola who would later win fame for his military campaigns in Britain. He was a philosopher, and perhaps also part of the embryonic Stoic opposition. Seneca claims that Graecinus, an excellent man (*vir egregius*), was executed because he was a better person than it suited a tyrant he should be. Tacitus, however, relates the execution to his refusal to prosecute Caligula's father-in-law, Marcus Silanus, probably in late 37.²⁷ Since Graecinus died in AD 40/1, surviving the trial of Silanus by more than two years, Tacitus' account cannot be taken at face value, although it is possible that if he

had refused to be party to Silanus' condemnation, this might have earned him Caligula's displeasure, and could have sealed his doom when his name was later linked to a conspiracy.

The senators as a group seem to have displayed a distinct lack of zeal in protecting those willing to take a stand against Caligula. Canus the philosopher does appear to have behaved with a certain courageous dignity, but the most impressive story of heroism is told of someone much lower on the social scale, a story that provides a useful link between the apparently early and later phases of the final conspiracy. Pomponius, a man of Epicurean leanings, who had held a number of political offices and was of consular rank, was betrayed by a disloyal friend, Timidius. The main witness was the freedwoman Quintilia, a beautiful actress and Pomponius' mistress.²⁸ She was tortured, but held firm, suffering horrific punishment that left her disfigured.²⁹ So moved was Caligula by her courage and the sight of her wrecked body that he gave her a gift of money as compensation, put by Suetonius at 800,000 sesterces. Pomponius (if he is correctly identified as Seneca's Pompeius) did not match Quintilia's bravery, and was so overwhelmed with gratitude when his life was spared that he kissed Caligula's foot. Interestingly, during her torture Quintilia is said by Josephus to have given a secret signal to reassure Cassius Chaerea, the praetorian tribune and Caligula's assassin, a gesture that would suggest that her lover was, in fact, involved with the conspirators, but which may be a fiction ('secret' gestures can rarely be historical facts, even at the best of times). The tradition that Cassius Chaerea and Quintilia were part of the same movement strengthens the notion that the supposed 'earlier' and 'later' conspiracies were each part of the same operation.

Caligula's investigation does seem to have smoked out one figure, about whom very little is known, the senator Scribonius Proculus. The emperor's tactic seems to have been to isolate him. He called a meeting of the senate and made a show of granting amnesty, saying that there were only a few members against whom he retained any anger. This was a clever psychological ploy, causing even greater general anxiety since each individual senator now feared for himself, which, of course, was Caligula's intention. Its least harmful outcome was a surge of abject sycophancy. At a more serious level, he succeeded in turning the senators against one another. One of Caligula's freedmen, Protogenes, took to carrying around two books, *Gladius* and *Pugio* ('sword' and 'dagger'), supposedly containing lists of those marked for execution. The freedman apparently entered the senate one day on some pretext, and as the senators were greeting him, rebuked Proculus. Why Proculus was targeted is not made clear, and he may well have been suspected of involvement in some sort of plot. This rebuke appears to have been a pre-arranged signal, since a fracas ensued in which a number of senators set upon the unfortunate man and brutally murdered him. The report that he was hacked to pieces is no doubt a considerable exaggeration, and some key elements in the story seem to be missing, but if it is in its essentials true, it shows that the situation had deteriorated to the point where senators could not feel secure even within the senate chamber.³⁰

The death of Proculus marked a setback to that small element in the senate prepared to take a stand against Caligula, since their colleagues seem to have scrambled to ingratiate themselves with him. They voted festivals in his honour, presumably thanksgivings for his deliverance, and at a more practical level provided a platform in the senate house for his security, and allowed him to have a bodyguard when attending senate meetings.³¹ Senators were theoretically not allowed to carry arms in the house, but they clearly did not always adhere to the rule. Augustus, for instance, was afraid of assassination and would wear a breastplate under his clothes at senate meetings (although he doubted its real effectiveness). He had senators searched before they came into his presence. In 32 Tiberius was granted an armed guard of twenty men when he was in the house but declined the offer, partly because it was without precedent and partly, according to Dio, because he was hardly so foolish as to hand out swords to men who hated him. In 33 the senate acceded to his request that when he entered the chamber he should be allowed an escort of praetorians, although in practice he could hardly have benefited from the privilege, as he was never again in the city. Caligula's bodyguard thus had precedents from the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius; the additional provision, however, of a special unit to guard even Caligula's statues seems to suggest that matters had taken a particularly serious turn.³² It may be that at this time Caligula increased the number of the praetorian guard from nine cohorts to twelve. An inscription predating the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 shows that the increase had certainly taken place by then, and Suetonius and Dio refer to the Prefects (plural) in the context of the conspiracy.³³ For his security Caligula seems to have relied mainly on a special corps of Germans, noted for their physical strength and brutality. It was Augustus who had first made use of German bodyguards, Batavians specifically. He had called them into service against Antony and was much impressed by their skill, especially in horsemanship, forming them into a distinct unit, quite separate from the praetorians. They had been removed from Rome in AD 9, after Varus' defeat, because of concerns about their loyalty. Suetonius claimed that Caligula's expedition to Germany was in part motivated by the need to recruit a Batavian bodyguard, an unlikely story but perhaps suggesting that he brought a unit back with him.³⁴

Opposition to Caligula from certain quarters of the nobility was not especially surprising, and he could deal with it to some degree by playing on either the insecurities or the ambitions of individual senators, and by pitting one member against another. But the most remarkable development in the conspiracy is that Caligula seems also to have lost the support of his own household staff. As noted earlier, Capito, in order to save his own life, revealed the names of a number of conspirators, including the freedman Callistus, the two Prefects of the guard, and the emperor's wife Caesonia.³⁵ While the inclusion of Caesonia's name is surely absurd, the rest of Capito's charges may well have had some basis in fact. Josephus implicates Callistus specifically, and in a later context Tacitus tantalisingly implies that he had a major role in Caligula's death, dealt with in one of his earlier (lost) books. To this end, Suetonius suggests that the main conspirators

found allies among the important freedmen (*non sine conscientia potentissimorum libertorum*). Callistus was the most influential and wealthy of Caligula's staff, and this very success, according to Josephus, had made him feel exposed to danger. Josephus adds that he had started to pay court to Claudius, anticipating that in the event of Caligula's removal the empire would pass to his uncle, and he even claimed later that he had been instructed to poison Claudius but found excuses for constantly postponing the deed – a claim that provokes Josephus' scepticism. In any case, after Caligula's death Callistus remained a powerful figure in the court.³⁶

Suetonius claims that the Prefects of the guard were also involved.³⁷ We know, from Josephus, the name of one of them, Marcus Arrecinus Clemens, father-in-law of the future emperor, Titus. Clemens' son (suffect consul in 73) was appointed commander of the guard in 70, partly on the grounds, as Tacitus ambiguously and perhaps ironically informs us, that his father had performed the same duty 'splendidly' (*egregie*) under Caligula.³⁸ The name of the second Prefect is unknown to us, but he may have been Arruntius Stella, who along with the praetorian tribunes calmed Caligula's loyal German guard after the assassination. Rather implausibly, Josephus claims that when Clemens was approached he gave his enthusiastic support to the endeavour but asked to be excused from active participation on the grounds of age!³⁹ It is more likely that he was shrewd enough to distance himself from the actual mechanics of the assassination and let his subordinates run the real risks.

Both Suetonius and Dio suggest that the individuals named by Capito were in fact innocent of the charges against them (Dio even has Caligula melodramatically inviting them to kill him on the spot). So obsessed was the emperor by his suspicions, however, that he supposedly tried to create divisions between them, ingratiating himself with one then the other in turn, and created such indignation on their part that they eventually betrayed him. Again, this seems implausible, and the insistence that the emperor's staff was not originally involved in the plot may spring from a desire to enhance the role of the senatorial conspirators, and to show Capito in a good light as someone who held out and did not betray any of the real participants.

Caligula's final weeks are more fully documented than any other period of his life, because of the detailed account provided by Josephus in the *Antiquities*.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, this does not mean that we are particularly well informed, since Josephus' narrative is at times confused, and vitiated by the corrupt state of his manuscripts.⁴¹ In Josephus' version of events, as in the other literary sources, the actual execution of the deed is engineered by military figures, the most prominent role being given to Cassius Chaerea, a tribune of the praetorian guard. His name is already familiar to us from his action during the disturbances on the Rhine following the death of Augustus, when he courageously cut a path through a mob of mutineers (Chapter 1). No other details of his life are known, except that by 41 at the latest he held a tribunate in the praetorian guard.⁴² In Josephus' account Chaerea is portrayed as a noble idealist, motivated by a profound commitment to Republican liberties.⁴³ Moreover Josephus makes him not merely the actual agent

of the deed but the inspiration and organisational power, serving a useful moral purpose as a virtuous man helping to carry out God's will. But all the sources, including Josephus, admit that Chaerea, quite apart from these putative moral impulses, did in fact have a personal grudge against Caligula. He had a weak, high-pitched, voice that sounded effeminate. As a consequence he was made fun of by Caligula, who called him a *gynnis* ('lass'). According to Dio, when asked for the daily watchword by Chaerea, the emperor chose suggestive expressions, such as 'Venus' or 'Priapus', causing much ribaldry among Chaerea's fellow praetorians. When Chaerea had occasion to thank him for anything, Caligula would offer his hand to be kissed, then at the last moment remove it, making obscene gestures. At a more mundane level, there are also grounds for believing that Chaerea had come under scrutiny for poor performance at work. He was made a tax collector for the imperial treasury, but was lax in carrying out his duties, Josephus providing the unconvincing explanation that he felt pity for the debtors.⁴⁴ Chaerea had the support of some of the other members of the guard. He won over the tribune Papinius, otherwise unknown, but perhaps related to the Sextus Papinius earlier executed by Caligula. His right-hand man in the actual execution of the deed was another tribune, Cornelius Sabinus.⁴⁵

Doubtless behind the military figures there lurked idealistic or ambitious senators.⁴⁶ Josephus in fact speaks of two senatorial conspiracies. He says that one was led by Aemilius Regulus of Cordoba, otherwise unknown, who was motivated by his commitment to the ideals of liberty and was determined to eliminate Caligula either by his own or a colleague's hand. He evidently must have chosen the second, more prudent, option, since after Josephus' introductory comments Regulus simply disappears from the narrative.⁴⁷ A much more sustained role is given by Josephus to the senator Annius Vinicianus.⁴⁸ He claims that Vinicianus was motivated partly by his friendship for the executed Lepidus, and partly, we are led to believe, by the realisation that he was himself a potential target of the emperor's anger. Most implausibly Josephus suggests that Chaerea and Sabinus approached Vinicianus, declared the watchword 'Liberty' and presented their plan. It was surely no accident that 'Liberty' was similarly the password adopted by Caesar's assassin Brutus at the battle of Phillippi.⁴⁹ Vinicianus praised the undertaking and pronounced himself ready, if need be, to follow Chaerea's lead. Again, there is the hint that Chaerea was perhaps the dupe of much more powerful figures who, for the most part, remained in the background. Several modern scholars see an important role for Vinicianus, and consider him the heart and soul of the plot from the outset, motivated not by a desire to restore the republic but by the determination to stage a takeover, by exploiting the ill feeling against Caligula.⁵⁰

Another senatorial figure whose name is associated with the conspiracy was Valerius Asiaticus, although his precise role is not easy to determine.⁵¹ He may in fact have convicted himself from his own mouth, since after Caligula's death he responded to the popular demands for the assassin's identity by the declaration that he wished it were he, playing a double game by evading responsibility

before the people but seeking to establish his credentials before the senate (and history). Ironically, he must have felt that this pronouncement could be politically advantageous for him at some future date. Although a friend of Caligula, he did in fact have a personal grudge against him. Seneca tells of Caligula's taunts at public banquets over Asiaticus' wife's lack of prowess in bed. Seneca claims that this was something that Asiaticus would hardly hear with equanimity, and that Caligula's behaviour contributed to his own destruction (*quae illum exitio dederunt*), but he omits to say what Asiaticus supposedly did in response. The only explicit statements about his involvement come from the mouth of Sosibius, the agent of Claudius' wife Messalina, when she brought Asiaticus down in AD 47. During Asiaticus' trial in that year Sosibius insisted that he had in fact been the ringleader of the earlier conspiracy (*praecipuus auctor*), and that he had boasted about his role afterwards. Of course, it would have been in Sosibius', and Messallina's, interest to exaggerate Asiaticus' role as a disloyal courtier, and, if he was indeed involved, the silence about any direct role for him in our main sources for the assassination, Suetonius, Dio and Josephus, is striking.

Another potential participant was Gaius Cassius Longinus (suffect consul in 30), governor of Asia. Dio tells us that Caligula recalled him after supposedly being warned by an oracle to beware of a Cassius (in fact, Cassius Chaerea). He was the brother of the Lucius Cassius Longinus who had been married to Drusilla, and had an unfortunate habit of boasting that his ancestor had assassinated Julius Caesar. He did escape with his life (perhaps being recalled too late to be put to death), since he went on to become governor of Syria, and eventually to be exiled by Nero.⁵²

Caligula's German guard were clearly convinced of the guilt of two senators they killed very shortly after Caligula died. Very little is known about them. Publius Nonius Asprenas held the suffect consulship of 38, probably designated for the office by Tiberius.⁵³ He was the first to be cut down by the guard after the assassination. Lucius Norbanus Balbus was also killed alongside Caligula. Josephus gives him the usual encomium awarded the conspirators, saying that he was among the noblest of the citizens, and could boast many generals among his ancestors. He is otherwise unknown.⁵⁴

In Josephus' account Chaerea was eager for action and frustrated by the hesitancy of his co-conspirators.⁵⁵ It was finally agreed that they would make their move during the celebration of the Palatine Games, which began on January 17, AD 41. The games provided good tactical opportunities for the conspirators. A temporary theatre was erected at the wooden hut that stood in front of the imperial residence, probably the spot from which Romulus had, according to tradition, taken the auguries on Rome's founding.⁵⁶ Thousands of spectators would be crowded into a confined space. Hence, if the attempt was made upon Caligula as he entered or left, his bodyguard would be hampered when it tried to come to his aid. The theatre would also enable a large number of fellow conspirators to congregate in one location. These seem to be more serious considerations than the rumour that Caligula intended to sail to Alexandria after the games, thus making immediate action essential.⁵⁷

The event was foretold by a fair share of portents, apart from the numerous signs visible on the actual day of the assassination.⁵⁸ Fortunately for the plotters none was recognised by Caligula, or, where they were, they were misunderstood – omens clearly are much easier to interpret after the event. They supposedly occurred as early as the Ides of March of at least the previous year, when the Capitol of Capua as well as the steward's room in the imperial residence on the Palatine were struck by lightning. According to Suetonius a man called Cassius claimed in a dream that he had been instructed to sacrifice a bull to Jupiter, while both Suetonius and Dio report that the oracle at Antium warned Caligula to beware of 'Cassius', clearly Cassius Chaerea, leading farcically to the recall of Gaius Cassius Longinus, the governor of Asia.⁵⁹ Astrologers were naturally on hand to foretell the event. Suetonius states that a certain Sulla informed Caligula that his death was near and quite unavoidable, and Dio reports that Apollonius 'of Egypt' foretold the death of the emperor to his fellow countrymen, and was supposedly summoned before Caligula on the very day of the assassination, surviving only because his punishment was postponed.⁶⁰ Pliny reports two incidents. When Caligula entered his final consulship in AD 41 the liver of the sacrificial victim was found to be missing. On a voyage from Astura to Antium shortly before the assassination, presumably his last journey outside Rome, Caligula's ship was held back by a small fish attached to its rudder.⁶¹

As the fateful day approached there was no abatement in the flow of ominous signs. The statue of Jupiter at Olympia, which Caligula had ordered Memmius to transport to Rome, was said to have burst out in a peal of laughter and the workmen trying to dismantle it took to their heels. On the eve of his death Caligula himself dreamt that he was in heaven beside the throne of Jupiter and that the god struck him with the toe of his right foot and hurled him to earth. By the time the day itself had arrived the portents were flying thick and fast. The very plays presented at the Palatine Games were seen as portentous. The dancer Mnester presented the *Cinyras*, in which the hero dies by suicide, while the hero's daughter, with whom he commits incest, is changed into a tree; much blood was shed during the performance. Suetonius claims that the *Cinyras* had been performed by Neoptolomus during the games when Philip of Macedon was assassinated in 336 BC, and Josephus gilds the lily by asserting that it is 'generally agreed' that Caligula died on the very same day of the year as when Philip was murdered.⁶² Another presentation was Catullus' farce, the *Laureolus*, in which the chief actor falls while trying to escape and vomits blood. In an anarchical reprise after the performance, secondary actors (*secundarum partium*) competed to show their skills, and the stage in the end reeked of blood.⁶³

Caligula entered the temporary theatre on the Palatine in the morning, when it was already crowded. On Wiseman's reconstruction of the topography of the Palatine, the temporary seating would have been set up in the forecourt of the imperial residence, looking onto the stage which was constructed at the hut of Romulus (Figure 12.1). Caligula was in high spirits and in an affable mood. No special seats had been set aside that day and everything was a jumble of confusion,

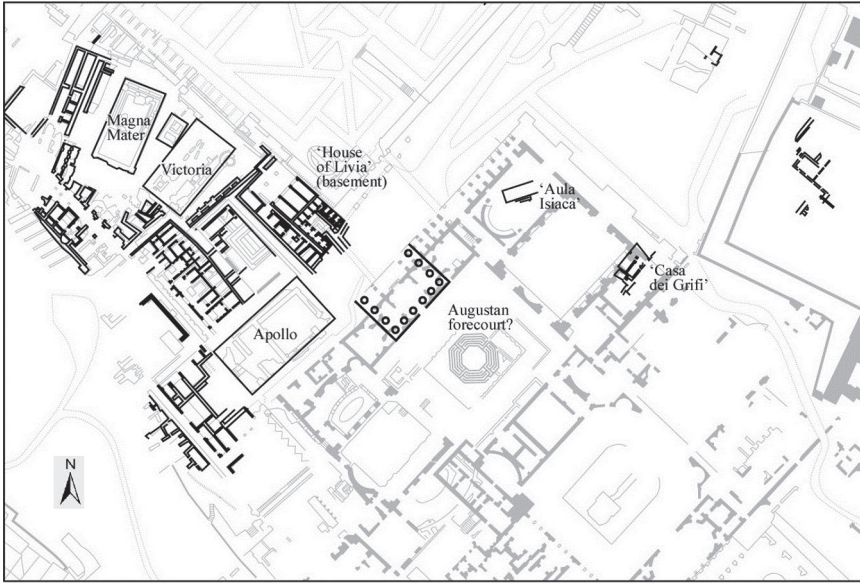


Figure 12.1 The Palatine in AD 41 (Peter Wiseman's reconstruction)

senators and equestrians, freedmen and slaves, men and women, all of which seems to have caused him much amusement.⁶⁴ He started the day's procedures with the sacrifice of a flamingo in honour of Augustus, possibly at the altar to the Numen Augusti dedicated by Tiberius in AD 6.⁶⁵ When he struck the bird the blood spurted out, supposedly spattering, depending on the source, either his own toga or that of Publius Nonius Asprenas.⁶⁶ After the sacrifice he took his seat at the right-hand side of the theatre, eating and drinking with his companions, the consul Pomponius Secundus at his feet taking his fill of food.⁶⁷ Caligula remained in good spirits. Fruit had been scattered onto the spectators, which attracted the exotic birds brought in for the occasion, affording much entertainment as people scrambled to catch the valuable creatures.⁶⁸ Among the spectators, behaving, we assume, with more dignity, was the ex-consul 'Cluvius' (*Clouitus* or *Clauitus* in Josephus' manuscripts), identified by some modern scholars with the historian Cluvius Rufus. In a famous exchange, he was asked by a former praetor 'Bathybius' (otherwise unknown) if he had heard of the planned coup, which led Cluvius to admonish him with the words of Homer, 'Stay silent, sir, unless another of the Achaeans hear the story.'⁶⁹ If the story is true (and it may only have been an attempt by Cluvius afterwards to range himself on the side of the angels), it means that knowledge of the conspiracy was widespread enough to be the subject of casual gossip in the theatre.

Caligula was in the habit of leaving the show at midday to bathe and have lunch (*prandium*) before returning for the rest of the entertainment. The plan of the conspirators called for him to be attacked in one of the narrow passages

that led from the theatre to the interior of the palace, where his guard would find it difficult to come to his aid. On the day planned for the assassination, a problem arose. Either because it was the last day of the performances or because of stomach troubles caused by excesses the previous night, Caligula showed signs of staying on through the lunch hour. Chaerea impatiently made his way to the exit. Vinicianus, feeling that the opportunity might slip from their fingers got up to urge Chaerea, as Josephus puts it, 'to be bold'. At this, Caligula tugged at his toga in a friendly manner and asked where he was going, and Vinicianus was obliged to resume his seat for a while. It was apparently Nonius Asprenas (although the reading of the name in Josephus' manuscripts is far from certain) who finally persuaded Caligula to leave, at the seventh hour, and just in time for the plotters, according to Josephus, since Chaerea was on the point of abandoning the original plan and of returning to the theatre to take his chances on assassinating Caligula where he sat. As the imperial party left the theatre, his uncle Claudius, his brother-in-law Marcus Vinicius and his friend Valerius Asiaticus were at the front. The crowd was held back, presumably as Caligula went through the vestibule area where the spectators were seated. They were told to show the emperor proper respect, but in reality the conspirators wanted to prevent anyone getting close enough to protect him.⁷⁰

Caligula followed behind with an individual whose name is so confused in Josephus' manuscripts that he is unidentifiable (the usual reconstruction is 'Paullus Arruntius').⁷¹ For some unknown reason he decided on a shorter route to the baths than that taken by his retinue, which happened to be the only one guarded. Once he had left the theatre he entered a narrow passageway, where there were no guards, and he stopped to inspect a group of young performers from the province of Asia. They were going to take part in the entertainment, although their precise role is unclear, either to perform in mysteries to be celebrated by Caligula, or to sing a hymn in his honour, or even to participate in the Pyrrhic dances.⁷² Josephus says that they were rehearsing in the actual passageway, although if so they seem to have chosen a strange spot. Caligula engaged the lads in conversation, and was impressed enough to ask for an immediate performance, which the leader had to decline because he had a chill.

It was at this moment that Caligula met his violent end.⁷³ The precise details of what transpired have been handed down in different traditions. Under the circumstances an accurate and authoritative account of his last moments is not to be expected, and as Hurley has pointed out, the narrative in the sources is so moulded that his death is a commentary on his life, revealing a tyrant humbled, an executioner executed and would-be usurper of divinity exposed as a mere mortal. According to Josephus, Caligula behaved in a characteristically mischievous fashion. When Chaerea asked for the watchword, Caligula offered him the usual mocking reply, whereupon he slashed the emperor between the neck and shoulder. No one was able to come to Caligula's aid, as complicit centurions, according to Suetonius, kept people at bay. Chaerea's blow was not a mortal one and as Caligula, groaning in agony, tried to make his escape, he was confronted

by Sabinus, who struck him to the ground, whereupon a crowd of assassins set upon him. Suetonius clearly knew of two accounts of the assassination (*duplex fama*), which differed in their details. One is basically that Chaerea crept up on Caligula as he was speaking to the youths, and stabbed him in the neck, crying out the ritual formula of the sacrifice *'hoc age'*, followed by Sabinus, who stabbed him in the chest. The other account has Caligula giving the password 'Jupiter', god of the thunderbolt and sudden destruction, on which Chaerea responded with *'accipe ratum'* (an obscure phrase, perhaps textually corrupt and possibly meaning something like 'accept the fulfilment of your vow') and drove his sword through the emperor's jaw.⁷⁴

Whatever the exact sequence of events, the sources agree that the first blow was not a mortal one. Yet Caligula stood little chance. Suetonius asserts that in the ensuing *mêlée* he was stabbed no fewer than thirty times, which did not prevent Josephus from confidently identifying an Aquila as the individual who struck the fatal blow.⁷⁵ Dio's subsequent claim that the assailants ate Caligula's flesh clearly deserves to be treated with more than the usual caution, but few would quarrel with his closing observation, even although it admittedly is, in the final analysis, unprovable, that on this day Caligula was given a practical demonstration that he was *not* a god.⁷⁶

The strategy of isolating Caligula from his aides had worked. The only resistance offered was from his litter bearers, who courageously tried to fight off the assailants with their poles – Caligula was able to command loyalty from at least the humbler members of his staff. The passages back to the theatre were by now blocked by attendants and the members of the bodyguard, so the assassins took another route into the palace, finding refuge in the 'House of Germanicus', one of the cluster of individual dwellings that made up the palace complex. In the confusion Vinicianus was seized, presumably by praetorians not involved in the plot, and had the good fortune to be hauled before Clemens, who allowed him to leave unharmed. This account, which stresses the great perils to which Vinicianus was supposedly exposed, may cover the reality that he in fact sought Clemens' protection at the first sign of danger.⁷⁷

Most of the conspirators seem to have escaped by the time Caligula's German bodyguard were able to force their way through to the scene, led by Sabinus, a former Thracian gladiator (to be distinguished from Sabinus, the praetorian tribune involved in the assassination).⁷⁸ When the Germans saw what had happened they were enraged, and wreaked indiscriminate revenge. Several of the assassins were cut down, along with some quite innocent bystanders.⁷⁹ The first they set upon and killed was Asprenas. If his toga had indeed been spattered by blood during the sacrifice, it may have attracted their attention, although it is not clear why he should have stayed near the body.⁸⁰ They then attacked Norbanus, who tried to fight back, but stood no chance against the great mob of assailants. An Anteius was also killed, unknown to us, but whose father of the same name had been driven by Caligula into exile and later executed. Josephus tells us that he was caught because he could not resist the pleasure of gazing at

the emperor's dead body and left it too late to escape.⁸¹ A number of conspirators who succeeded in evading the German guard owed their lives to the ingenuity of the physician Alcyon. He was obliged to treat the wounded, and smuggled some of the conspirators out of the passageway, on the pretext of looking for supplies.⁸²

The Germans realised that they had not caught all of the assassins. They guarded the exits to the theatre area and a number of them rushed in, carrying the heads of Anteius and others, which they placed on the altar, leading to scenes of utter confusion. It is striking that Josephus concedes that not everyone was happy at the news of the assassination, and that many people were, in fact, stunned by the event. The situation was further confused by conflicting rumours, that Caligula was alive and being tended by his doctors, that he had escaped to the forum and was addressing a public meeting, even that he had made up the story of his death as a test of loyalty. The Germans were finally brought to order by Arruntius Stella (on what authority is unclear) and the praetorian tribunes.⁸³

In the meantime, others fell victim to the plotters. Josephus relates that the tribune Lupus was despatched to the palace to eliminate Caesonia and her daughter. When he entered, he found Caesonia stretched by her husband's corpse, stained with his blood, with her daughter Drusilla beside her. Caligula's wife died bravely, run through by Lupus' sword. His little daughter was then killed, her head smashed against a wall.⁸⁴ The accounts of Caesonia's murder present two serious difficulties. In the first place, in the narrative of Josephus (the only source to give an indication of the timing), this final bloody act was not carried out until the evening of the assassination, after the senate had called an emergency meeting. Yet it seems almost inconceivable that Caesonia would not have sought to escape, and even less conceivable that the conspirators would have delayed acting until the evening and have allowed her the opportunity to do so. Another, even more serious, problem is that Lupus was sent by Chaerea to the palace to murder her, yet the palace seems to have been under the control of the praetorian guard almost immediately after the assassination. The likelihood is that the murder of Caesonia and her child had been decided upon well in advance, to avoid the danger that she might become a focus of resentment and resistance, as Agrippina and her sons had been in the previous reign, and that their deaths were supposed to follow almost immediately after Caligula's. It will be recalled that the conspirators were said to have escaped 'into the palace'. It makes more sense that Lupus was to kill Caesonia then, and that the account of her body being draped over her dead husband's corpse (not mentioned in Dio or Suetonius) is a poetic elaboration.

Caligula's body was taken at some point into one of the rooms of the imperial residence, where Agrippa reputedly took initial care of it, placing it on a makeshift bier and draping it with whatever cover was on hand.⁸⁵ The corpse was later taken to the gardens of the Lamii, the imperial property on the Esquiline Hill, just outside the city limits, where in happier times (for him) Caligula had met the Jewish delegation from Alexandria.⁸⁶ There it received a hasty cremation and a temporary grave, under a light covering of turf. Given Agrippa's earlier gesture, it seems very possible that he organised this. On their return from exile

Caligula's sisters are said to have exhumed him to give him a proper cremation and to have placed his remains in a tomb. Such was often the fate of autocratic emperors. The final disposition of Nero was carried out by his nurses, Egloge and Alexandria, helped by his loyal mistress Acte; Domitian was cremated by his nurse Phyllis. Caligula's final resting place is unknown. In view of the rather squalid arrangements made after the assassination and Claudius' later efforts to discredit him, it seems unlikely that his remains would have been deposited in the prestigious residence for departed Julio-Claudians, the Mausoleum of Augustus. But it cannot be ruled out.⁸⁷

Caligula's ghostly apparition was frequently to be seen in the Lamian gardens, until he received a proper burial, and the part of the palace where he died continued to be haunted until it was burnt down, presumably in the devastating Palatine fire in 80.⁸⁸ Even in death he could not resist mischief.

Appendix 1: the date of *AEA* 14 (Smallwood 10) and Caligula's presence in Rome

The Florentine copy of the Arval record, *AEA* 14, is riddled with errors, and carries no explicit indication of its year. It records a sacrifice for the birthday of Germanicus on May 24; the next ritual mentioned was performed in the Arval cult centre at the shrine of Dia, in the presence of Caligula, as well as of Vinicianus and others, some time before June 1. The grove of Dia lay on the Via Campana some four miles to the west of Rome, outside the city limits, and Caligula's presence there would not contradict Suetonius' claim that he did not enter the city until August 30. Caligula and Vinicianus were thus present at some ritual between May 24 and June 1. Vinicianus was not a member in AD 37, and the Arval record for 38 is extant; the fragment must thus belong to 39 or 40. Now during the ceremonies the magister of the college is absent (his place is taken by the promagister), but his name is recorded, and is seen to end in -ulus. Since the magister for 39 is known to have been Appius Silanus (*AEA* 13abcd.3 [Smallwood 7.5]), the inscription can therefore belong only to the following year, 40. The only member of the college in 40 whose name fits is Memmius Regulus, former husband of Caligula's third wife, who was, of course, absent in his province at this time. On June 5, or slightly before, there followed a sacrifice for the birthday of someone of prominence related to Caligula, whose name has been erased (OB NATALEM/]C. AUG), but is probably Caesonia (see Pasoli 1950: 14; Dabrowski 1972: 420–1). For objections to this dating of the fragment: Dessau 1924–30: 2.1.128; Phillips 1970: 371.

Appendix 2: the date of Caligula's death

(See also [Chapter 11](#).)

The evidence for the date and place of Caligula's death is very confused. All the main sources (Jos. *AJ* 19.77; Suet. *Cal.* 56.2; Dio 59.29.4) agree that the

event took place during the *Ludi Palatini*. Dio 56.46.5 says these games had been established after the death of Augustus by Livia, in AD 15, when she held a private festival (*idian...panegyryn*) lasting for three days, a festival celebrated also by subsequent emperors. The fourth-century calendar of Philocalus and the fifth-century calendar of Silvius indicate that the *Ludi Palatini* began on January 17 (*Inscr. Ital.* 13.2.239, 264). January 17 was a significant day, since it was the anniversary of Augustus and Livia's marriage. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that it was Livia who established the January 17 date. By the time of the emperor Gordian, the calendar of Philocalus shows that the games lasted for five days (in fact extended to six to incorporate Gordian's birthday on January 20), but we do not know when the length was first extended.

Josephus *AJ* 19.77 says that the original plan called for an assassination on the first day of the festival, but he seems to say that when the three statutory days of the games had passed, the deed was carried out on 'the last'. The reading of Josephus' manuscript here is very corrupt and throws little real light on the problem. Suetonius *Cal.* 58.1 states that the assassination took place at the seventh hour *VIII Kal. Febr.* (January 24). Dio 58.28.5 dated the day of Caligula's accession as March 26, AD 37 and Dio's epitomators say that he ruled for three years, nine months and twenty-eight days (Dio 59.30.1), which would seem to give a death on January 23, but can be reconciled with Suetonius' testimony if Dio was here using inclusive reckoning (counting both first and last digit). Wardle 1991 argues for January 24, which is widely accepted (see, for instance, the title of the paper of Arand 2005, and Kienast 2011: 85, 90).

Suetonius *Cal.* 54.2 says that on his last day Caligula ordered a *pervigilium* (an 'all night' performance) to take the opportunity to appear on the stage. Clearly Caligula decided to extend the festival in 41, but the precise nature of the extension is confused in the sources. Dio 59.29.5–6 says that the conspirators restrained themselves for five days (thus to January 22), and when Caligula decided to participate in the performances and announced a three-day extension they could stand it no longer and went ahead; the *implication* is that they acted at once; Degraasi 1963: 400–1 and Wiseman 1980; 1987b: 231–2; 2013b: 57 defend that date (January 22).

The situation is even further confused by Josephus' comment that the choir of boys was still rehearsing but not planning to perform on that day because the leader had a chill, suggesting that there was at least one more day left. Perhaps the reference is to the *pervigilium*, which might have been intended to go beyond the three extra days already decreed. Suetonius' January 24 can be defended only if the festival was already six days long in 41, and Caligula extended it even further on this particular occasion.

Suetonius' 'seventh hour' is probably fairly accurate. The assassination took place as Caligula was asked for the watchword. The praetorian guard changed every twenty-four hours at about the eighth hour, when a new cohort would take its place as guard, and the tribune received the watchword from the princeps (Mart. 10.48.1–2; Suet. *Nero* 8).

Appendix 3: Marcus Cluvius Rufus as a source for Caligula's reign

In his account of the assassination of Caligula, Josephus reports (as the manuscripts read) that a 'Clauiton' of consular rank (the emendation 'Cluvius' is generally, but not universally, accepted; *PIR*² C 1202, 1206; Goud 1996: 481) during the Palatine Games reproved a certain 'Bathybius' (Vatinius?), for talking openly about the plot, with a (mis)quotation of Homer (*AJ* 19.91–92).

In the nineteenth century Mommsen 1870: 318, 320, 324 n. 1 suggested, as little more than a passing thought, that Josephus and Suetonius used the same one source for the assassination of Caligula, Marcus Cluvius Rufus, since when in the supposed incident Josephus quotes Cluvius, he must have found the anecdote in Cluvius' own writings. Mommsen's notion of a single source was initially influential (accepted, for instance, *inter alios* by Groag 1901: 123; Momigliano 1932b: 305 who saw him also as the source for Dio; Balsdon 1934b: 223–34; Timpe 1960: 474, 480 who sees Josephus modifying his source; Charlesworth 1933: 105–19 added weight to Mommsen's original suggestion by noting that the highly rhetorical and metaphorical style of Josephus' account of Caligula's death is untypical of him, and must be based on a Latin original. Questions were already raised by Henning 1922: 84–5, and Mommsen's thesis is generally now rejected; see Wardle 1992b (serious reservations); Goud 1996; Scherberich 1999; 2001; Wiseman 2013b: xiv–xvii, who argues for more than one Roman source.

The first Cluvius to hold the consulship was a Gaius Cluvius, elected in 29 BC and prevented from taking it up, until allowed by Octavian (Dio 52.42.4). The historian Cluvius Rufus was perhaps his grandson. He at some point held a consulship, possibly in late 40 (Tortoriello 2004: 623) under Caligula (but see Goud 1996 on the date) and was the herald of Nero when that emperor performed in Rome in 65, when he is described by Suetonius as a consular, and on his tour of Greece in 66–67 (Suet. *Nero* 21.1–2; Dio 63.14.3). He was also legate of Hispania Tarraconensis under Galba and afterwards transferred his loyalty to Otho, then to Vitellius (Tac. *Hist.* 1.8.1; Suet. *Nero* 21.2; Dio 62.14.3), but he apparently suffered no serious consequences under Vespasian, when it is to be assumed that he began to write his history. References by later authors to Cluvius' work all relate to the reign of Nero and its aftermath, to events in which he may well have participated. He was Tacitus' source for the information that the loyalty of Burrus towards Nero was not in doubt, and that Agrippina was responsible for the attempt at incest with Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 13.20.3, 14.2.4; Pliny *Ep.* 9.19.5). Plutarch (*Otho* 3.1–2) identifies him as the source of the information that Otho used the *cognomen* Nero in his correspondence. Plutarch also cites him for the etymology of the word *histrio* (*Quaest. Rom.* 107). Pliny the Younger (9.19.5) recounts a discussion between Cluvius and Verginius Rufus on the proper role of the historian.

Townend in a series of articles in the 1960s identified a considerable number of passages in Suetonius, Tacitus and Dio that supposedly are derived from Cluvius, who, he suggests, was embarrassed by his involvement with Nero and tried to show

his independence by writing a ‘farrago of scandals and lampoons’. But Cluvius was respected by Tacitus, and Wardle 1991 has argued that he should be viewed as a respectable historian, most likely an annalist; Wiseman 2013b also observes that while Cluvius may have focused on the lurid, this does not preclude his being a serious historian. But we must be cautious about using him as a source for Caligula. As Syme has pointed out, there is no certainty that the histories of Cluvius included Caligula (Syme 1958c: 179, 287, 293); Syme suggests Servilius Nonianus as a source for Josephus. For further cautions see Steidle 1951: 77–8; Feldman 1962, who suggests a fairly wide range of possible sources; Ritter 1972b; Feldman 1984: 328–30 provides a useful summary of the scholarship on the topic up to that date. Indeed, we cannot even be sure that the Cluvius present at the *Ludi Palatini* on the day of the assassination is identical with the historian. *PIR*² C 1202, 1206 voices doubts as do Timpe 1960: 500; Ritter 1972b: 86; Wardle 1992b: 467; Levick 2013: 551, 554–5, who suggests it might have been his father; Goud 1996: 481 suggests that the mystery consular might have been a Claudius. Clearly, if Cluvius was present in the theatre and was a source for Caligula’s reign he would have been a hostile one. He must have been aware of the plot beforehand, or, at the very least, have wanted to pretend to his readers that he was somehow associated with it.

Notes

- 1 Suet. *Dom.* 21.1; see Pagan 2012: 116.
- 2 The evidence for his presence in the vicinity of Rome in May appears in a fragment of the Arval record, *AEI* 14.15 (Smallwood 10.15), now lost and known only from an anonymous sixteenth-century copy in Florence ([Appendix 1](#)).
- 3 See Smallwood 1970: 254.
- 4 Jos. *AJ* 18.245–55. The possibility that Antipas made the journey to Campania in 39 cannot be ruled out.
- 5 Pliny *NH* 7.98; 37.13; Suet. *Cal.* 49.2.
- 6 Dio 59.20.4: presumably the elections were restored to the senate for the contests of 41.
- 7 Jos. *AJ* 19.71; Suet. *Cal.* 37.1; Dio 59.25.5. Josephus reports that the donative was made from the *basilike* (‘palace’); Suetonius presumably misread his source in claiming that it was made from the Basilica Julia (accepted by Gelzer 1918b: 407).
- 8 For all our uncertainty about the death of Caligula we can confidently rule out the claim of the assassins that he committed suicide: Suet. *Cal.* 51.3.
- 9 Winterling 2011: 90–107.
- 10 Barrett 2008: 82; on the motives, see especially Bernstein 2007, who suggests that the reported senatorial zeal for the restoration of the republic was a smokescreen for the replacement of Caligula by another princeps.
- 11 Dabrowski 1972; Lindsay 1993.
- 12 Suet. *Cal.* 56.1 speaks of several discrete conspiracies. For two separate conspiracies: Gelzer 1918b: 412–14; Charlesworth 1934b: 664; Balsdon 1934b: 101.
- 13 The sources are vague about the number of conspiracies against Caligula. Suet. *Cal.* 56.1 comments that before the final plot there were ‘one or two’ others, and that the Prefects of the guard were implicated in *quadam coniuratione* (‘in some conspiracy or other’); Jos. *AJ* 19.14 says that conspiracies were frequently formed against him.

- 14 Jos. *AJ* 19.60–2 (claiming that equestrians also were privy to the plot), 133; Tac. *Hist.* 3.68.1; Dio 59.29.1. Timpe 1962: 80–1 claims that the conspiracy was much wider-known than it needed to be, since it was necessary for Vinicianus, whom he sees as its leader, to build up a political following.
- 15 Sen. *Ira* 3.18; Suet. *Aug.* 13.2; *Cal.* 27.4; Suetonius claims that Caligula would even send litters to convey fathers too ill to attend the executions.
- 16 Sen. *Ira* 2.33.3–6.
- 17 Dio 59.25.5b (epitome). Note that Zonaras and the Vatican epitome of John Patricius summarise somewhat differently. The latter states simply that Cerialis said nothing (thus implying that only Papinius did).
- 18 Sen. *Ira* 3.18.3.
- 19 Tac. *Ann.* 15.74.3, 16.17.8.
- 20 Grady 1981: 261–7 suggests a textual corruption, and that Dio's account originally mentioned Anicius Cerialis and his son and Papinius. Sextus Papinius was in all probability the son of Sextus Papinius Allenius, consul in 36 (*CIL* 5.2823; Tac. *Ann.* 6.40.1). Another of Allenius' sons committed suicide shortly before Caligula's accession, by hurling himself from a window (Tac. *Ann.* 6.49.1).
- 21 Sen. *Ira* 3.18.3; Dio 59.25.6–7 (the name is given as Betilinus). Suet. *Cal.* 26.3 also speaks of the scourging (but not the execution) of a quaestor (almost certainly Bassus) who had been charged with conspiracy.
- 22 Sen. *Tranq.* 14.4–10; Seneca does not actually identify him as a Stoic but his bearing and behaviour leave little doubt: see Roller 2001: 120; Plutarch (*Frag.* 211) calls him a Stoic.
- 23 Sen. *Ep.* 73.1, 103.5; Brunt 1975: 9.
- 24 Tac. *Ann.* 3.51.3 (as amended). Boethius *Con. Phil.* 1.4.94 seems to reflect a tradition in which Canus was actually involved in a plot: *cum [sc Canus] a Gaio Caesare Germanici filio conscius contra se factae coniurationis fuisse diceretur*.
- 25 *Chronographia* 1.625 (Plutarch *fr.* 211). The information is attributed to Plutarch.
- 26 *PIR*² A 742 (followed by Nony 1986: 381) claims, without evidence, that Antiochus was also executed by Caligula. It is unlikely; Antiochus was still alive some time later, since Syncellus adds that Canus appeared to Antiochus in his sleep, to reassure him that his soul had passed to a higher place.
- 27 Sen. *Ep.* 29.6; *Ben.* 2.21.5; Tac. *Ag.* 4.1; Balsdon 1934b: 98.
- 28 Sen. *Ben.* 2.12.1; Jos. *AJ* 19.32–36; Suet. *Cal.* 16.4; Dio 59.26.4; Lindsay 1993: 87; Hurley 1993: 60–1; Wardle 1994: 176. Suetonius relates the incident without giving names. The names of Timidius and Quintilia are provided by Josephus, who calls the accused Pompe dius (Roman names in Josephus are invariably transliterated wrongly). Dio gives his name as Pomponius. Seneca speaks of the acquittal of a Pompeius Pennus. He is a consular, and Tortoriello 2004: 623–4 puts his consulship under Tiberius. The identification of Pompeius Pennus with Pomponius/Pompedius is far from certain (*PIR*² P 636 doubts it). Hanslik 1952: 2267 and Syme 1949: 9 accept the identification of Seneca's Pompeius with Sextus Pompeius, consul of AD 14, but *PIR*² P 585 and Syme 1958c: 21, n. 1 doubt it. This Sextus Pompeius seems to have been very wealthy, to judge from Ovid *Pont.* 4.15. He would have been at least in his 70s in 40/1; his father, the famous Sextus Pompeius, was defeated at sea in 36 BC and his son could not have been born after 35 BC at the very latest. Pompeius Pennus/Pomponius may have been related to another Pompeius described by Seneca as a kinsman of Caligula and owner of great estates; Swan 1976 makes a case for Publius Pomponius Secundus, consul of AD 44, freed under Caligula's amnesty; Edmondson 1992: 141, 177 identifies him as Publius' brother, Quintus; on the Quintilia episode: Pagan 2004: 106–7.
- 29 Quintilia's conduct is reminiscent of that of the freedwoman Epicharis who held out against similar horrific torture during the Pisonian conspiracy (Tac. *Ann.* 15.57;

- Dio 62.27.3); generally freedmen/women could not be tortured to give evidence against their patrons, but that rule went into abeyance when the charge was *maiestas*; see Brunt 1980: 256–9.
- 30 Suet. *Cal.* 28; Dio 59.26.1–2; Orosius 7.5.10. Protogenes is mentioned by Juvenal (3.120) among the famous *delatores*. He was executed in the first year of Claudius’ reign (Dio 60.4.5) and the books were destroyed. Scribonius Proculus was probably the father of the brothers Scribonius, who took their own lives during the reign of Nero (Tac. *Ann.* 13.48, Dio 63.17.2); see Wardle 1994: 252. For his possible involvement in conspiracy, see Willrich 1903: 457.
- 31 Dio 59.26.3. The arrangement did not continue after his death, and Claudius sat on the consul’s tribunal or on the tribune’s bench in the body of the house.
- 32 Tac. *Ann.* 6.15.5; Suet. *Aug.* 35.2, *Tib.* 65.1; Dio 54.12.3, 58.18.5, 59.26.3.
- 33 Suet. *Cal.* 56.1; Dio 59.25.7. See Willrich 1903: 306; Durry 1954: 1613.
- 34 Suet. *Aug.* 49.1, *Cal.* 43.1; Dio 55.24.7, 56.23.4. Keune 1901: 1902 says he filled out the numbers from prisoners of war. The standard modern work on the subject is Bellen 1981. There seems to be no parallel for the publicly appointed guard for the statues (see *CIL* 8.9052 for a private guard). Pekáry 1985: 114, 140 thinks that it may have been honorary.
- 35 Dio 59.25.7 (epitome).
- 36 Jos. *AJ* 19.64–69; Tac. *Ann.* 11.29.1, 12.1.3; Suet. *Cal.* 56.1; Dio 59.29.1. On Callistus, see Baldwin 1992: 76.
- 37 Suet. *Cal.* 56.1. Dio on another occasion speaks of only a single *eparchos* being involved (59.29.1), but refers to both Prefects in the context of Capito’s charges (59.25.7). This may be the result of his using two different sources. Bingham 2013: 23 notes that only officers of the praetorian guard are identified as being privy to the plot.
- 38 Jos. *AJ* 19.37–47; Tac. *Hist.* 4.68.2; Suet. *Titus* 4.2.
- 39 Jos. *AJ* 19.45; see Bergener 1965: 124.
- 40 Feldman 1984: 326–31 provides a detailed survey of scholarship on Josephus’ account of the assassination up to 1984, which can be updated by Wiseman 2013b.
- 41 Wiseman 2013b: xiv–xvi argues that he used at least two Roman sources for the assassination. These sources are not always harmonised, as is most evident in his treatment of the aftermath (see [Chapter 13](#)).
- 42 Tac. *Ann.* 1.32.5 calls him an *adulescens* (up to about thirty years old) at the time of the mutinies in 14; at the time of the assassination he is called a *senior* by Suet. *Cal.* 56.2.
- 43 For the level of Republican sentiment among those plotting against Caligula, see: Wilkinson 2012: 51–55.
- 44 Sen. *Cons.* 18.3; Jos. *AJ* 19.21; Suet. *Cal.* 56.2; Dio 59.29.2; even the fourth-century poet Ausonius writes of *Chaerea mollis* (‘effeminate Chaerea’) (*De Caes.* 4.4). The charge of effeminacy as a contributory motivation of the assassin was clearly something of a *topos*. Philip of Macedon was assassinated by his bodyguard Pausanias over a supposed homosexual love spat (Diod. 16.93), and Caracalla insulted his praetorian Prefect Macrinus over his low birth and effeminacy (Herodian 4.12.1–2); see Lindsay 1994; Scott 2012: 24–5; Hurley 2014. Woods 2012: 467–71 suggests that Caligula was mocking Chaerea not for his putative effeminacy but because he had been obliged to collect the taxes on prostitutes. Ironically Caesar used the watchword ‘Venus’ at the battle of Munda in Spain in 45 BC, but there it was used positively, of the mythological founder of the Julian *gens* (Appian *BC* 2.104; Dio 43.43.3 notes that Caesar gave Venus a military aspect, with an image of her in armour on his signet ring).
- 45 Jos. *AJ* 19.46; Suet. *Cal.* 58.2; Dio 59.29.1.
- 46 Timpé 1962: 79–81 argues that Chaerea was simply the ‘front man’ under the control of powerful senators; see also Bernstein 2007: 9 ‘die Praetorianertribunen waren nur das Werkzeug eines senatorischen Plans’.

- 47 Jos. *AJ* 19.17, 19. The name ‘Regulus’ is reconstructed from a corrupt manuscript reading. Willrich 1903: 456 proposed instead ‘Rectus’, who could be the friend of the philosopher Canus, discussed above. Kavanagh 2001b suggests that if Willrich’s reading is correct, Rectus might have been the husband of Seneca’s aunt, Helvia, at one time Prefect of Egypt (Sen. *Helv.* 19.6).
- 48 Jos. *AJ* 19.20, 49, 52; Tac. *Ann.* 6.9.5–7; Dio 60.15.1. The name appears in Josephus as Minucianus; since it appears twelve times with the same spelling it is likely Josephus’, not a copyist’s error; see Wiseman 2013b: 47.
- 49 Dio 47.43.1. Sentius Saturninus the consul drew a contrast between Chaerea and Brutus and Cassius (Jos. *Ant.* 19.184).
- 50 Gelzer 1918b: 414; Timpe 1962: 89; Bergener 1965: 125; Scheid 1975: 200–1.
- 51 Sen. *Cons.* 18.1–2; Jos. *AJ* 19.159; Tac. *Ann.* 11.1–3; Kavanagh 2001a rightly points out the uncertainties about Asiaticus’ role.
- 52 *CIL* 10.1233; Suet. *Cal.* 57.1; Suet. *Nero* 37.1; Jos. *AJ* 20.1; Tac. *Ann.* 12.11.4, 12.12, 1, 16.7.3, 9.1, 22.9; Dio 59.29.3.
- 53 Dio 59.9.1. A Lucius Nonius Asprenas was consul in 29, but the precise relationship with the Nonius, consul in 38 (son of ‘Marcus’), is not clear. Wiseman 2013b: 66 express doubts about his, and Norbanus’ (next note), involvement.
- 54 Jos. *AJ* 19.123. Josephus actually calls him *Barbaros Norbanos*. Two Norbani brothers held consulships, Lucius Norbanus Flaccus in AD 19, and Lucius Norbanus Balbus in 15. Either of them might have been the father of the Norbanus who died in 38. Neither is noted for the distinction of his ancestors, although the former had a reputation as an excellent trumpeter (Dio 57.18.3). It is possible that Norbanus was the grandson of Lucius Cornelius Balbus, who as proconsul in Africa defeated the Garamantes and others in 19 BC and was awarded a triumph; see Groag 1936: 931.
- 55 Jos. *AJ* 19.70–74.
- 56 Jos. *Ant.* 19.75 locates the temporary theatre in a wooden hut in front of the *basileon* (the emperor’s residence, rather than his palace). Wiseman 2013b: 56 for the suggestion that the hut was likely the *auguratorium*, where Romulus observed the auspicious flock of birds when he founded the city (Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 2.5.1–2).
- 57 Jos. *AJ* 19.80–83; Philo *Leg.* 250, 338. The time of the year makes such a project unlikely; Philo claims that he planned to follow the coast, going ashore each day.
- 58 Guastella 1992: 289–94; Wardle 1994: 356–7.
- 59 Suet. *Cal.* 57.1, 3; Dio 59.29.3.
- 60 Suet. *Cal.* 57.2; Dio 59.29.4. The birthplace of the famous seer was Tyana, not Egypt. In 96 Apollonius spoke of Domitian’s assassination at the very moment it was carried out in Rome (Dio 67.18.1; Philos. *VA* 8.26).
- 61 Liver: Plin. *NH* 11.189; fish: Plin. *NH* 32.1–4.
- 62 Jos. *AJ* 19.94–5; Suet. *Cal.* 57.4; Apollod. 52.14. On that occasion Philip was celebrating the marriage of his daughter Cleopatra to Alexander of Epirus, an event that took place, in fact, in the summer or autumn.
- 63 Catullus, the composer of mimes, who probably wrote during the early Julio-Claudian period, may possibly be the famous late republican love poet of the same name, as suggested by Wiseman 1985: 192–2; Herrmann 1985: 225–6 identifies him with the lover of Caligula (Suet. *Cal.* 36.1), see Guastella 1992: 296. Frangoulidis 2005 observes that Suetonius’ whole account of the assassination is presented in terms of a theatrical performance; see Thévenaz 2001 on the prevalence of the theatrical motif through Suetonius’ *Vita*, also Ash (forthcoming). On the *Laureolous*: Coleman 1990: 64–5. Herrmann 1985: 227–8 suggests that Suetonius has confused the *Laureolus* with *Cinyras*, since there the hero leaps from high to commit suicide.
- 64 Wiseman 2013b: 57 points out that apart from Caligula’s general arbitrary approach, the performances were provided as a private gift of the emperor, and the usual formal distinctions of seating need not be observed.

- 65 The identification with the altar to the Numen Augusti is made by Wiseman 2013b: 58, although he prefers a dedication in AD 9.
- 66 Jos. *AJ* 19.87, on Asprenas; Suet. *Cal.* 57.4 on Caligula. Suet. *Cal.* 22.3 notes flamingos among other exotic birds sacrificed in Caligula's cult; on the birds, see Hurley 1993: 89. The spattering of the toga with blood would be a portent of death, applicable to both Caligula and Asprenas, and the mention here is accordingly to be viewed with suspicion. Tac. *Ann.* 2.14.1 reports that Germanicus dreamt that his garment was spattered with blood during a sacrifice.
- 67 Jos. *AJ* 19.91; Caligula possibly chose seating in the wing of the theatre to allow for easy egress, given the general chaotic assignment of seats. The right *keras* 'horn' (appropriate of either side of a semi-circular structure) presumably was more convenient for access to the imperial residence when he left the theatre.
- 68 Jos. *AJ* 19.86, 93; Dio 59.29.5.
- 69 Jos. *AJ* 19.91–2. 'Bathybius' is almost certainly a corruption of the correct name; 'Vatinius' is a possibility; Birley 2000: 622–3 suggests Pacuvius, attested as legate of Legio VI in Syria in AD 19 and governor of the same province at some unspecified time (Sen. *Ep.* 12.8; Tac. *Ann.* 2.79.2). Cluvius (or Josephus) slightly misquotes Homer *Iliad* 14.90–1 omitting 'this' (*touton*) before 'report'.
- 70 Jos. 19.96–103; Suet. *Cal.* 56.2, 58.1, *Claud.* 10.1. Josephus says that Caligula left at the ninth hour, as opposed to Suetonius' seventh.
- 71 Kavanagh 2010b plausibly suggests that he may be Arruntius Aquila, consul of AD 38, identifying him with Aquila, the assailant of Caligula (Jos. *Ant.* 19.110, below).
- 72 The 'Pyrrhic' dances seem to have been a popular element in pantomime, involving extravagant staging. Suet. *Ner.* 12.1–2 reveals that Nero was fond of them, and reports him attending performances of Pasiphae being mounted by a bull and Icarus making a spectacular fall, narrowly missing the emperor.
- 73 Jos. *AJ* 19.103–5; Suet. *Cal.* 58.1; Dio 59.29.6. Josephus is the only one to mention the shortcut. Dio adds that some of the youths came from Greece.
- 74 Suet. *Cal.* 58.2–3; Hurley 1993: 209–10; 2014; moreover Ash (forthcoming) illustrates how Suetonius' descriptions of assassinations use certain literary templates, and Power 2015 shows the verbal links between his account of the ends of Caligula and of Julius Caesar. Hurley suggests that Suetonius' first version uses the metaphor of the sacrificial victim; the phrase *hoc age* is uttered by the priest to the individual charged with slaying the animal; Nony 1986: 392 describes Caligula's final moments as a 'véritable scène sacrificielle'.
- 75 Jos. *Ant.* 19.110, perhaps Arruntius Aquila, consul of AD 38 (see above). Jos. *Ant.* 19.116 speaks of the passages being blocked by praetorians but says nothing of anyone trying to come to his aid. Thirty blows: Suet. *Cal.* 58.3; Suetonius clearly relishes such statistics; Caligula's score was higher than Caesar's, at twenty-three blows (Suet. *Jul.* 82.2) and well ahead of Domitian's, at a mere seven (Suet. *Dom.* 17.2).
- 76 Sen. *Cons.* 18.3; Suet. *Cal.* 58.3; Dio 59.29.7, 30.1; the eating of the flesh does continue the metaphor of the sacrifice, after which the celebrants would eat the meat of the victim.
- 77 Jos. *AJ* 19.153–6. Timpe 1962: 83 suggests that Vinicianus' arrest took place sometime later, and is inserted unconvincingly into the events at the theatre. It provides a springboard for Clemens' subsequent noble speech. Wiseman 2013b: 69 suggests that Josephus' source was well disposed to Clemens because of the distinction of his son, father-in-law of Titus (Suet. *Titus* 4.2).
- 78 Jos. *AJ* 19.122; Suet. *Cal.* 55.2, 58.3. The Thracian Sabinus was later rescued from death in a gladiatorial combat by Messalina, whose lover he allegedly was (Dio 60.28.2).
- 79 Jos. *AJ* 19.123–6; Suet. *Cal.* 58.3; Dio 59.30.1b.

- 80 Josephus offers no explanation for Nonius Asprenas' presence by the body. Dabrowski 1972: 255–6 suggests that he may have been killed simply as a bystander and his role elevated by later tradition.
- 81 Anteius was perhaps the brother of Publius Anteius, legate in Dalmatia in 51/2, who committed suicide in 66.
- 82 Jos. *AJ* 19.157.
- 83 Wiseman 2013b suggests that he might have been the second Prefect of the guard, in addition to the one identified, Marcus Arrecinus Clemens.
- 84 Jos. *AJ* 19.190–200; Suet. *Cal.* 59. Suetonius calls the murderer a 'centurion' of the praetorian guard.
- 85 Jos. *Ant.* 19.237.
- 86 Phil. *Leg.* 351; on the gardens, see [Chapter 11](#).
- 87 Smallwood 1970: 317 states as a fact, without explanation, that he was buried in the mausoleum.
- 88 Suet. *Cal.* 59.1, *Nero* 50, *Dom* 17.3.

AFTERMATH

With the death of Caligula senators could enjoy a brief moment of euphoria. For the first time in living memory, they felt they were on the threshold of resuming the great role that had been theirs during the republic (a period that very few of their number would in fact have experienced), answerable in a vague sense to the Roman people, but at the whim and mercy of no single individual. After suffering through the nightmare of the Tiberian treason trials and the often arbitrary despotism of Caligula they felt that were once again masters of their universe. They were convened, it seems, on the Capitol, a place of great symbolism, since meetings of the senate had been held on the Capitol under the republic.¹ They were summoned, according to Suetonius and Dio, by the consuls, Gnaeus Sentius Saturninus and Quintus Pomponius Secundus. This had happened also after the deaths of Augustus and Tiberius, but on this occasion the consuls' role was much more than a mere formality, in fact it seemed almost a declaration of newly regained independence.² They also took the precaution of summoning the three urban cohorts (the city police) to seize control of the forum and Capitol; they then transferred the funds from the treasuries (presumably the *Aerarium Saturni* in the Temple of Saturn in the forum) to the Capitol, and set guards over them.³

The senators seem to have been brimming with confidence.⁴ A decree charging Caligula with unspecified crimes was passed, and there were even demands that all the Caesars be condemned to what modern scholars call *damnatio memoriae* (this expression was not used in antiquity), the removal of their names from the record, and also that the temples dedicated to them be destroyed. There was, of course, an element of self-interest in the apparent senatorial idealism. They no doubt appreciated that the ending of the imperial system would, in fact, lead to a restoration of their own powers and privileges, a development foreseen also by the praetorians and the people. Josephus comments that the kind of government they would have instituted was an 'aristocracy, as the government of old had been', and observes that they met in a spirit of excessive arrogance, as if power already lay within their hands.

While the senators were congratulating themselves, ordinary people were expressing their anger. As was soon to become apparent, there was considerable

distress over the death of Caligula and a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the idea of a return to the republican system and the privileges of the old nobility.⁵ A noisy meeting took place in the forum, whether as a formal assembly or simply a mob gathering is unclear, where angry demands were made by the crowd for the identity of the assassins. The tension was increased by disorderly soldiers roaming about in the area.⁶ The key to the future, however, lay neither with the senate nor the people, but with the praetorian guard. The precise course of events from this point is far from certain, as we have to rely on Josephus' detailed but often jumbled account, which seems to be at times an inconsistent pastiche of at least two different versions.⁷ In the first version the praetorians had a coherent plan of action from the outset. After the murder they gathered together to work out what steps to take to maintain their privileged position. Convinced that the principate would be retained in some form or other, they were determined that it fall to a candidate of their own choosing. Only one name seems to have been considered, Caligula's uncle Claudius, who, as son of the elder Drusus and brother of Germanicus, enjoyed the prestige of a distinguished family name. They went to the imperial residence to seek him. But in his description of the actual events at the residence, Josephus clearly used a different source, one followed in the main also by Suetonius and Dio, that implied that the praetorian action was much more spontaneous, even accidental. Their earlier plan is now forgotten.⁸ Suetonius relates that, when the assassins blocked access to Caligula just before the murder, Claudius went into the palace, to the *Hermæum* ('chamber sacred to Hermes'). This use of the Greek name 'Hermes' for a sanctuary dedicated to the Roman Mercury is very unusual, and the room may have been named after the *Hermata* found in Egypt, at Hermopolis or Alexandria, dedicated to Hermes-Thoth. It has even been suggested that the room was the still surviving *Aula Isiaca*, a chamber decorated with mythical Egyptian (but not necessarily Isiac) motifs in the east wing of the original palace complex, and later incorporated into the Domitianic palace (Chapter 11).

When Claudius heard word of the assassination he made for a nearby *solarium*, an area exposed to the sun, a balcony or a flat roof. He then hid himself behind a curtain that covered the entrance.⁹ He was found there by one of the soldiers, named by Josephus as Gratus, a highly, and perhaps suspiciously, appropriate name from Claudius' perspective, since it means 'pleasing, welcome, agreeable'.¹⁰ Claudius supposedly thought at first that he was about to be put to death for killing Caligula. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Gratus, we are led to believe, had the brainwave of persuading his fellow soldiers to acclaim Caligula's uncle as emperor. They then led the much-relieved Claudius out of the palace, to the large area open to the public on the north of the Germalus, the *Area Palatini*. Bystanders who saw the incident misread it, and thought that Claudius was being taken off to his death. Misleading reports of this incident may well have reached the senators, and could account for their overconfidence during the latter part of this first day.¹¹ In Josephus' *second* version it was not until this point that the praetorians in a body determined to make Claudius emperor, influenced

by the still powerful force of Germanicus' name and the patent ambition of some of the powerful senators. Above all, there was the fear that even if the imperial system continued, someone might seize power independently of them. Convinced by their own logic, the praetorians took Claudius off to their camp at the Porta Viminalis. This second version is reflected also in the accounts of both Suetonius and Dio, who stress the chance discovery of Claudius by praetorians who simply happened to be in the palace, prowling about in search of plunder.¹² As Suetonius puts it, Claudius became emperor *mirabili casu* ('by an astonishing accident').

Whichever is the true version of events on the Palatine (if either), the aftermath is clear enough. Once Claudius was secure in their camp, the troops acclaimed him as emperor.¹³ Reports of this development began to reach the senate, where the consul Sentius Saturninus advised a firm line against him, and delivered a lengthy speech, praising Chaerea and extolling the notion of liberty. Again, it was liberty in a limited sense, since he seems to have been mainly concerned with the suffering of the political elite, and spoke of the history of threats to *genmaion* (the nobility). It is hard to believe that Saturninus, whose family had done so well under the principate, was moved by the republican ideals described so glowingly by Josephus, who adds an anecdote that might confirm our scepticism. During the course of his speech it was noticed that Saturninus was still wearing a signet ring with the image of Caligula; Trebellius Maximus rose, tore it from his finger and smashed it to the ground.¹⁴

In the meantime Claudius received a new visitor. Herod Agrippa had initially seen to the body of Caligula. He then made his way to the nearby praetorian camp at the Porta Viminalis. Agrippa had a keen political eye, and appreciated at once the strength of Claudius' position. A later tradition, derived very possibly from the romanticised *Life of Agrippa*, depicted him as king-maker, showing no hesitation in enlisting himself firmly on what he perceived as the winning side.¹⁵ He reputedly urged Claudius to stand firm, then went on to the senate, pretending to arrive casually from a banquet (suggesting that the meeting of the senate was probably taking place on the evening of the assassination). Once there he sought to impress upon the members the hopelessness of trying to take a military stand against Claudius and the powerful praetorians. A compromise was eventually arranged, that Agrippa would accompany a deputation of 'men of lofty character' to try to reason with Claudius.¹⁶ By now night had fallen. Josephus relates that when Chaerea asked for the watchword and the consuls gave the reply of *Libertas* the symbolism was not lost on the spectators, who realised that the watchword had at last passed back to the consuls 'a century' after their liberty had been lost (perhaps dating the event from the first 'triumvirate' in 60 BC).¹⁷

Despite their apparent bravado, the senators must have realised how impotent they in fact were. In the early hours of the following day they reconvened at the temple of Jupiter Victor on the Capitol. A mere one hundred turned up.¹⁸ They had now come to terms with the reality that the imperial system could not be abolished, and in an air of fantasy proceeded to debate who would be the best candidate, wasting further time on fruitless bickering. As noted earlier the

consul Saturninus was one man who made a bid. There were at least two other candidates, Marcus Vinicius (the husband of Caligula's sister Livilla), who was discouraged by the consuls, and Valerius Asiaticus, whose candidacy was blocked by Annianus Vinicianus. We have no idea what role, if any, Vinicius might have played in the assassination. As noted earlier, despite the suspected involvement of his wife Livilla, Caligula's sister, in the conspiratorial activities of AD 39, his name is nowhere associated with the events of that year. His marriage connection would make him an appropriate candidate, but he is generally seen by modern scholars as amiable and unambitious, and an apparent lack of drive might explain why the consuls deemed him unsuitable (one of them, of course, had ambitions of his own). Valerius Asiaticus had perhaps belatedly tried to establish his credentials by asserting after the fact that he wished that he could claim to be the assassin.¹⁹ The reason for Vinicianus' opposition to Asiaticus is not clear. The general scholarly view is that he had entertained his own personal ambitions at the outset, but felt the need to hold back for appearances' sake. But by this time he may well have felt that events had overtaken him, and having allowed the opportunity to slip from his own hands, he could not bear to see another candidate succeed.²⁰ It may be, however, that he had decided to throw his support behind his relative Vinicius, and indeed one reading of Josephus' manuscripts (so corrupt at this point that lengthy speculation is fruitless) would have Vinicianus supporting Vinicius against the consular opposition.²¹ It is difficult to assess Suetonius' claim that Galba, the future emperor, was urged to make a bid but expressed a preference for the quiet life. He would, presumably, have been in Germany, and could have received news of the assassination only after Claudius had become firmly established.²²

The senatorial deliberations were in fact pointless, and the deputation sent to Claudius failed utterly. Immediately on their arrival they would have seen the enormous military advantage that Claudius enjoyed over the senate. If we are to believe the tradition that gives Agrippa an important role (which might have been highly exaggerated), any hope they might have had of bluffing Claudius was frustrated by him, since Agrippa advised his old friend of the disunity and weakness of his opposition. On coming into Claudius' presence, according to Josephus, they fell on their knees before him. Claudius may have taken one further measure at this time to strengthen his position, with the appointment of Rufrius Pollio, and possibly Catonius Iustus, as Prefects of the guard.²³ He administered an oath of loyalty, made more attractive, no doubt, by an enormous donative, 15,000 or 20,000 sesterces, depending on the source, but a massive amount in any case, for the regular praetorians, and a proportionate amount for each officer. Similar sums were apparently promised for the legions.²⁴ Suetonius claims that Claudius established a precedent in fostering the loyalty of the soldiers by bribes. In essence Caligula had made the same gesture when on the death of Tiberius he added to the sum bequeathed by his predecessor to the troops an equal sum from his own funds, the total, of course, still very much smaller than Claudius' award. That Augustus and Tiberius had left money for the soldiers in their wills is not strictly relevant; what was significant was that Caligula had provided money in

anticipation of future services. It might even be argued that his father Germanicus had shown the lead in using the money under his personal control in Germany to bribe the mutineers after the death of Augustus. As a further indication of the strength of Claudius' position, a motley group made up of gladiators, members of the *vigiles* (the nine cohorts of the fire brigade) and rowers from the fleet were streaming into the praetorian barracks to offer their support for him.²⁵

All of this would have had an unsettling effect on the senators, not helped by the shouts of the soldiers of the urban cohorts outside calling for the retention of the principate. Worse was to follow. Despite the urgent pleas of Chaerea, the urban cohorts, the last military support for the senate, abandoned the senatorial cause and drifted over to join the praetorians. The senators then began to quarrel and to blame one another for the calamity. They also began to move over to Claudius. When Quintus Pomponius Secundus, Saturninus' colleague in the consulship, went over to his side, it marked the end of any serious opposition.²⁶ Claudius was escorted to the Palatine, and the remaining senators were summoned before him (he did not attend a formal senate meeting for thirty days). The senators were given rough treatment by the praetorians; Pomponius had to be protected by the personal intervention of Claudius, and one of the senators, Aponius, was injured.²⁷ The speed and thoroughness with which the resistance had collapsed is illustrated by the apparent ease with which Claudius persuaded them to condemn the hapless Chaerea. For all the praise that had been heaped on him, no one seems to have spoken up on Chaerea's behalf when his fate was put to the vote. He was condemned, and forced to commit suicide, which he did bravely. He had his admirers. At the next Festival of Parentalia, celebrated after February 13, when sacrifices were made to dead relatives, people showed their gratitude by burning offerings to Chaerea.²⁸ Claudius would have recognised that to no small degree he owed his elevation to Chaerea, but also saw the danger posed by the precedent of regicide. Others died with him, but the only one identified is Lupus. Surprisingly, Chaerea's fellow tribune Sabinus was neither charged nor dismissed from his office, although he committed suicide soon after. Generally, Claudius pursued reconciliation rather than recriminations. Suetonius records that he made a decree proclaiming general amnesty, and Dio observes that some of the individuals who had either advocated a restoration of the republic or whose names had emerged as potential candidates for the principate obtained not only pardons but even went on to high office (Valerius Asiaticus was awarded a rare second consulship).²⁹

Claudius succeeded in taking power within twenty-four hours of his nephew's death, in an operation that was so remarkably smooth that it provokes questions about the possible role of Claudius himself, or at least of those around him. Although none of the sources speaks of his direct involvement, Josephus does reflect a tradition that his rise to power came about through a cohesive plan, at least in the immediate aftermath of the assassination. Could this plan also have preceded the assassination? The supposedly chance discovery of Claudius in the palace could well have been deliberately arranged, as Josephus' alternative source

seems to suggest. If we apply an appropriate scepticism to Josephus' notion that the participants were motivated by the ideals of liberty, we must wonder why several tribunes and at least one Prefect of the guard should have given their support to a plot to restore a system that would have reduced their own privileges. Even more baffling is the conduct of Callistus. As an imperial freedman he would hardly have hoped to benefit under a restored republic, and his switching of allegiance to Claudius, whom he saw as Caligula's successor, betrays a foresight that is, literally, incredible. In a later context Tacitus refers tantalisingly to an earlier reference (in a now lost section of the *Annals*) that implies that Callistus played an important role in Caligula's murder. He was certainly well rewarded by Caligula's successor. He became a *libellis* to Claudius, and grew even richer than before. Pliny comments that the four small onyx columns erected by Cornelius Balbus in his theatre caused a sensation, but that he had personally seen no fewer than thirty columns of the same material, and large ones at that, in Callistus' dining room.³⁰

The plot had been a complex one, involving many individuals, acting, in some cases, out of idealism, in others, out of self-interest. But there may have been at its centre a small group who had a clear idea of where events should lead, and who were happy to exploit and manipulate others, like Chaerea, to their own ends. The praetorian guard and the imperial freedmen would not have served their self-interest by abolishing the principate. Some of them might, however, have been persuaded of the merit of removing a specific princeps whose individual behaviour threatened to discredit the whole institution, and of replacing him by a more suitable incumbent. Claudius may or may not himself have been a party to such a plot from the outset. Josephus does suggest that the reason he was hiding in terror after the assassination was fear that he would be blamed for Caligula's murder. And if he was involved he would have been keen to keep his participation tightly under wraps, and to discourage any suggestion that he had prior knowledge. It would suit him to foster the notion that the principate came to him only by an accidental twist of fate.³¹

A serious decision facing Claudius on his accession was the official attitude to be adopted towards his predecessor. The resentment felt by the nobility towards Caligula would take time to abate, and Claudius clearly needed to be sensitive to the strength of their feelings. The books of the freedman Protogenes, along with the papers that Caligula pretended he had burnt but had kept in the palace, were destroyed, and Protogenes himself was put to death. Poisons that had been stored in the palace were also destroyed. Caligula's *acta* were rescinded, and his name, like that of Tiberius, was taken from the lists of emperors mentioned in oaths and prayers.³² Yet Claudius was prepared only to go so far. When the senate attempted to declare Caligula a *hostis* and to subject him to an official *damnatio memoriae*, as they would do later to Nero, Claudius blocked the attempt.³³ His reasons would have been twofold. It would clearly have been dangerous to condone an act of regicide, which might have provided a precedent for malcontents during his own reign. Moreover, Claudius had to keep in mind the feelings of ordinary people. Caligula had enjoyed considerable popular support and the newly established

emperor would hardly have wished overtly to risk alienating a large segment of the population. Thus there was no official *damnatio memoriae*. But on the other side of the very delicate balance, Claudius needed to show that Caligula's assassination came about largely as the result of that emperor's shortcomings, not because the institution of the principate deserved to be abolished. And added to the mix, of course, Claudius seems himself to have been subjected to a certain amount of personal humiliation by Caligula in the latter part of the reign. All of this helps to explain why he set out on a subtle campaign of denigrating his predecessor, a campaign that would continue for a number of years.³⁴ Thus the inscription recording the repair by Claudius of an arch of the Aqua Virgo makes the point that it had been damaged by Caligula. He seems to have removed Caligula's name as the dedicator of the repaired Theatre of Pompey, and to have taken the credit for Caligula's achievements in Mauretania.³⁵ He abandoned the unfinished amphitheatre that Caligula had started to build near the Saepta, and restored the Temple of Casor and Pollux to its proper sacred function.³⁶ In the text of an edict that he issued in connection with the Anauni, an Alpine people who had usurped the rights of Roman citizenship, Claudius criticises the neglect of the matter by his 'uncle Tiberius Caesar', because of his absence (in Capri) and by Caligula, whom he refers to simply, and slightly, as 'Caius'.³⁷

History has been unkind to Caligula largely because he deserved it. But there can be little doubt that his successor was determined, by both overt and subtle means, to suppress any lingering trace of kind memory that Caligula might have enjoyed. Claudius' impact on the written record, and his long-term influence on the literary sources for the reign, can only be surmised. We have more direct if not incontrovertible evidence for the treatment that Claudius seems to have meted out to the physical reminders of Caligula. The 'smear' campaign began soon after Caligula's death, when, on his own initiative (as distinct from a senatorial decree), Claudius ordered that the statues of Caligula, over which the senate had ironically at one stage set a guard, be removed. A similar fate would be meted out on a later occasion to the statues of Nero's wife Poppaea and his mother Agrippina after their deaths, but significantly in Caligula's case it could not be carried out in the open, but stealthily at night, and it is probably to be distinguished from the spontaneous destruction of Caligula's statues carried out by mobs immediately after his death.³⁸ How systematically his images were removed is difficult to assess. Only three identifiable images of Caligula bear signs of having been mutilated: a small bronze, where the eyes have been hacked out and the face has been pummelled with a hammer; a fragment from Aquileia made up of a mouth and chin and attributed to Caligula may have been hacked from a statue head; and another fragment from Saguntum (Spain) where the same may have happened to the upper part of a colossal head with a *corona civica*.³⁹

Of course a more economical approach to dealing with statues no longer fit for public display was not to mutilate or destroy them, but to recycle them into the images of other notables. This may have happened fairly extensively in the case of Caligula, and indeed he is the first known figure to have his portraits reworked



Figure 13.1 Head of Caligula, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen (photo: Ole Haupt)

on a large scale, a practice that became common after later unpopular reigns: over half of his identified portraits have been reworked in this way. The majority of them were reworked into representations of Claudius, and a fair number became Augustus. Ironically, given the fate of that emperor's own images, one seems later to have been recut to make a head of Nero.⁴⁰ Another possible response to Claudius' decree that the statues were to be removed from public view would be to take that instruction literally, and to remove the statues and place them in storage. This appears to have happened in the case of a fairly large number of Caligulan portraits. Their excellent state of preservation suggests that they were stored away or perhaps buried. The fine head from the Schoss Fasanerie in Fulda (*Figure 3.3*) is so well preserved that it does not seem to have been exposed to the elements. The famous head now in Copenhagen (*Figure 13.1*) still has traces of the paint on the left eye, again because it was maintained in sheltered location. In both cases the noses, usually the most vulnerable spots in portrait sculpture, are intact.⁴¹

There are some inscriptions where Caligula's name has been erased, but they are not numerous enough to prove anything beyond local spontaneous action. In Rome it seems that Caligula's name was removed from the Theatre of Pompeii.⁴² Within Italy erased inscriptions are found in Milan, Bologna, Pompeii, and from the rest of the empire in Dalmatia, Africa, Egypt (Alexandria), Asia (Samos and Cyzicus). At Thugga in Africa the name of Caligula was removed from the victory

arch and replaced by that of Claudius. Yet, this is surely balanced by the number of inscriptions where Caligula's name is allowed to stand, notably in Rome itself on the funerary inscription for his mother Agrippina in the Mausoleum of Augustus. The lack of consistency is well illustrated by the two boundary stones from Dalmatia, where the name has been erased from one and allowed to stand on the other.⁴³

We might also expect an unofficial condemnation of Caligula to be reflected in the fate of Caligula's coins. There do exist several coins that manifest attempts to deface Caligula's image with a chisel. Moreover there is also a relatively high proportion of Caligulan coins where individual letters of the name have been removed (such as the C standing for the *praenomen* Gaius), as a means of obliterating his identity.⁴⁴ But we should be cautious about drawing conclusions from what may be random defacements. Zehnacker reports a hoard of 1,184 coins in Gaul, a mixture of Gallic and Roman, republican and imperial. Some 90 per cent of them, including coins of Nemausus depicting Augustus and Agrippa, are disfigured by a chisel, usually with an X on the face. It is noteworthy that the republican pieces are also disfigured. A fit of pique on this scale would have been an expensive proposition, and they more than likely reflect some routine local demonetisation, prior to melting and recasting. Giard cites examples of the image of Augustus on an altar of Lyons types damaged by a chisel. LeGall reports coins of Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius damaged by the chisel, along with undamaged coins of Nero!⁴⁵

There is also a group of Caligula's Vesta asses with the countermark TICA (Tiberius Claudius Augustus) employed in such a way as to obliterate the *praenomen* and *cognomen* C (Gaius) CAESAR. But this need not be seen as *damnatio memoriae* and it has been suggested that it was done in Gaul for the use of soldiers on the Rhine, where Claudius would have felt the need to assert his authority. In fact countermarks that are common in other reigns occur rarely on Caligulan coins. The mark NCAPR, attributed to the mid-years of Nero and found on sestertii from the beginning of Tiberius' reign until Claudius, is never found on bronzes with the head of Caligula. There are also coins where whole Claudian types have been overstruck on Caligulan. Thus we find a restriking of Caligula's asses (*RIC*² 1.38) with the Constantia type of Claudius (*RIC*² 1.95) but they surely tell us nothing about Caligula's reputation, since Giard observes that Tiberian coins were also overstruck, sometimes by Caligulan types!⁴⁶

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the reaction to the memory of Caligula's reign is an isolated reference to Claudius' official treatment of his predecessor's coinage. In the context of the honours voted to mark Claudius' victory in Britain in 43, two years after the assassination, Dio states that the senate, in hatred of the memory of Caligula, decreed that all the bronze coinage bearing his image should be melted down. The bronze was supposed to have been converted to no better purpose, since Messalina reputedly used it to make statues of the actor Mnester to reward him for satisfying her lust.⁴⁷ It seems at first sight strange that if such a measure was in fact enacted it should have been postponed for two

years. Perhaps, because Claudius took power quickly, it might have been difficult to implement such a measure at the very beginning of the reign because it might have led to a currency shortage, and Caligulan bronzes would have had to remain in circulation. Indeed, the wholesale demonetisation of Caligula's *aes* coinage seems an implausible undertaking. While an immediate and wholesale recall would hardly be a practical proposition, it may be that after a couple of years, when feelings had grown less intense, Caligulan coins were routinely melted down and restruck as they came into official hands, particularly in the military zones, in a gradual process.⁴⁸

The evidence of coin finds does not throw much light on the question. We do find that in specific sites there is often a scarcity of coins bearing Caligula's image, as, for instance, in the Pozzarello hoard, near Bolsena, which contains 719 copper and orichalcum coins from the republic to Nerva, but no *aes* of Caligula in any denomination.⁴⁹ But the same relative scarcity is often reflected also in finds of precious-metal coins. Three hoards from widely ranging sites illustrate this. At Bredgar, in Kent, which Carson dates to AD 43 and associates with the Claudian invasion, the *aurei* number Tiberius 19, Caligula 0, Claudius 4. The hoard of *aurei* discovered in 1976 in Patras, Greece, dated after AD 47 reveals Tiberius 22, Caligula 2, Claudius 11. A hoard from Pudukota in India, probably Flavian, shows Tiberius 169, Caligula 14, Claudius 152.⁵⁰ On the other hand Caligula's low value coinage can seem relatively high on some sites: the coin list from the early Claudian conquest fort at Hod Hill in Dorset shows a marked preponderance of Caligulan *Vesta* asses relative to the issues of other reigns.⁵¹ Nony has even shown that in Gaul local mints may have continued after the assassination to issue bronze asses with a portrait of Caligula rather than Claudius.⁵²

Scholars often cite on this question the poet Statius, who, writing towards the end of the century, describes an article bought very cheaply *plus minus asse Gaiano* ('for about a Caligulan as'). But the Statius passage does not prove demonetisation. To emphasise the cheapness of certain second-hand books received as a gift, costing only an as, Statius wants simply to show how despicably low an amount a single as represents. By adding the expression 'Gaian' he simply adds insult to injury by associating the coin with what is presumably a generally pejorative term.⁵³ Statius' abusive phrase might better suggest that the Caligulan as had been debased, but there is no evidence of any decline in *aes* standard in Caligula's coinage; there may in fact have been a slight improvement.⁵⁴

Dio's claim of an official demonetisation of the low value coinage is in the end unprovable. But it remains of considerable interest as the only account we have of a specific measure taken at the highest administrative level to degrade Caligula's reputation. Much of the campaign to besmirch him was presumably conducted at a more informal level. And it seems to have been effective. One might observe the difference between the afterlives of Caligula and Nero. There is only one known case where someone later felt it was advantageous to be associated with Caligula. During the chaotic aftermath of Nero's death in AD 68, there was a rumour that the praetorian Prefect Nymphidius Sabinus was the outcome of an affair between

Caligula and the daughter of Callistus, and Plutarch claims that it quite suited Nymphidius for the rumour to be in circulation.⁵⁵ Nymphidius, who seems to have been the son of a gladiator (to whom he in fact bore a strong resemblance), was seeking to boost his stock with one narrow group, the praetorians, in his unsuccessful bid for the principate, and in any case he may have been hoping to play not on a lingering attachment to the memory of Caligula personally, but rather on a claim to his Julian blood. Hardly evidence of any broad or lasting regard for Caligula.

By contrast Tacitus records systematic attempts to exploit a lingering Neronian esteem. Otho, one of the four generals who made a bid for power after Nero's death, pondered how he might honour him as a means of winning popularity, and opted for setting up statues to him. As a mark of respect, Tacitus says, people would greet Otho as Nero Otho. Vitellius carried out sacrifices to Nero's shade, a gesture that went down well.⁵⁶ No fewer than three false pretenders appeared in the east at regular intervals over the next twenty years, claiming to be Nero, and received a warm reception in some quarters (the Parthians in particular were convinced that the third pretender was the genuine article and welcomed him into their midst), evidence that long after his death Nero was by no means universally unpopular.⁵⁷

One difference between the immediate aftermaths of the reigns of Nero and Caligula was that after Nero's death a succession of ambitious generals spent over a year in a bloody struggle over who would succeed him. Unlike Claudius, each was too busy seeing off his rivals to devote his energies to denigrating the man who initially created the vacancy. But although Caligula's name may well have been tarnished by an unrelenting campaign to discredit him, it was a name that he had already sullied by his own shameful conduct. We may decry propaganda because it seeks to tell people how to think, but from time to time what is being propagated may not be far off the mark. Claudius could well have harboured a personal grudge against Caligula, but his bleak assessment of his nephew's character and competence probably had the ring of truth. If Caligula has perpetually been cast as one of history's villains, he has no one to blame but himself.

Notes

- 1 Suet. *Cal.* 60.1 and Suet. *Cal.* 60, in relatively brief accounts, place the first meeting on the Capitol. Josephus in the much more detailed account in the *Antiquities* says nothing about the location of this meeting (*AJ* 19.158) but posits a second meeting (248–9), possibly next morning, and goes out of his way to place that one in the Temple of Jupiter Victor, which Wiseman 2013b: 93 confidently locates on the Capitol. In the more summary account at *BJ* 2.205 Josephus mentions only one meeting, which he places on the Capitol and at which the senators 'declare war on Claudius'. It may be that Dio and Suetonius (and Josephus in the *BJ*) have merged two separate meetings into a single one. Confusing the issue, Suet. *Claud.* 10.3 says that on the morning after the assassination (hence after Josephus' second meeting) Claudius was summoned to the *curia*, which would naturally be taken to mean the Curia Julia, although Suetonius may be using it loosely of the place where the senate was assembled; Timpe 1962: 85, n. 4 and Wiseman 2013b argue that the Capitol was not used until the second meeting.

- 2 Herodian 2.12.4 was still able to say, of the time when Didius Julianus was dethroned in 193, that the consuls took over business whenever there was a succession crisis.
- 3 Urban cohorts; Jos. *Bj* 2.205; Suet. *Claud.* 10.2; transfer of funds: Dio 59.30.3, 60.1.1. Dettenhofer 2003: 192–4.
- 4 Jos. *Aj* 19.160; Suet. *Cal.* 60. Dio 60.1.1 claims that at this first meeting a variety of opinions was expressed, some for the republic, some for the principate, but he has telescoped into a brief section a whole series of events following the assassination, and it is likely, as suggested by Josephus and Suetonius, that at this initial meeting the senators showed a unanimous intention of restoring the republic. Suetonius' comment that some (*quidam*) wanted to demolish the temples suggests that opinions were expressed but that no formal decree was passed.
- 5 Jos. *Aj* 19.228.
- 6 In describing the incident both Jos. *Aj* 19.159 and Tac. *Ann.* 11.1.2 use the expressions appropriate to a formal assembly (*contio*), but it is more likely to have been a spontaneous gathering.
- 7 Wiseman 2013b: xiv–xvi on similar grounds argues for at least two sources; Pagan 2004: 101 notes the relatively few first person references in Josephus' narrative here, an indication, she claims, of a certain detachment; Scherberich 2001 argues that Josephus used a number of sources (including a work on Cassius Chaerea), which he abbreviated and moved around, resulting in the inconsistencies. Josephus seems to have been unaware of the internal contradictions; ironically, in the introduction to the *Bellum*, he criticises historians who make use of self-contradictory hearsay (Jos. *Bj* 1.pr.).
- 8 Jos. *Aj* 19.216–26.
- 9 Suet. *Cal.* 10.1; the scene after Claudius left the Hermacum is difficult to reconstruct since we do not know what architectural form the *solarium* took, or why he went there; *Aula Isiaca*: Rouillet 1972: 48.
- 10 Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* 3.16) calls him Vimius, an Epirote centurion; Bird 1984: 42 suggests that this reflects Victor's anti-barbarian prejudices.
- 11 Jos. *Aj* 19.221–3; Suet. *Claud.* 10.2. Josephus calls the area *demosion*, a term which elsewhere (*Aj* 13.265–6, 16.164) is used for 'treasury', but here seems to distinguish the private palace from the public area (see Wiseman 2013b: 87). In a highly corrupt text, Josephus seems to suggest that the bystanders saw and pitied Claudius inside the palace, which seems most implausible.
- 12 Suet. *Claud.* 10; Dio 60.1.
- 13 Claudius' elevation took place as the result essentially of a military coup. But it was not an undivided military; as Fuhrmann 2012: 127, n. 17 points out, the praetorians and the urban cohorts were initially in conflicting situations, since the latter were guarding the forum and Capitol on behalf of the senate (Suet. *Cal.* 10.3).
- 14 Jos. *Aj* 19.166–87; Trebellius Maximus is likely the legionary legate of that name attested in Syria in AD 36 (Tac. *Ann.* 6.41.1), consul in 56 and governor of Britain 63–69 (Tac. *Agr.* 16.3; *Hist.* 1.60.1). Josephus states, without elaboration, that there were equestrians present. On Saturninus' speech, see Timpe 1960: 476–7, 486–7 who doubts its sincerity; Bernstein 2007: 13–15 argues that the speech was simply a manoeuvre to discourage other claimants from coming forward, and that it was in effect preparation for Claudius' acceptance; on the special role played by Saturninus: Troiani 2004.
- 15 Jos. *Aj* 19.236–45, *Bj* 2.206–208; Dio 60.8.2. In the *Bj* Agrippa plays a fairly minor role, and Dio simply says that he cooperated with Claudius in aiding the accession. The *Aj* gives him an important central role; Schwartz 1990: 91 for Josephus' use in the *Aj* of his 'semi-fictional' biography. Timpe 1960: 502 says that *Bj* used a Jewish source, the later *Aj* a Roman source not yet available before 75 (the earliest possible date for the *Bj*).

- 16 Dio 60.1.4. Jos. *AJ* 19.234–5, perhaps conflating two separate sources, seems to speak of two separate embassies.
- 17 Jos. *AJ* 19.186–7. On ‘Libertas’ in this context, see Hammond 1963: 98. The consuls gave the same password as the one symbolically given by Chaerea to Vinicianus (Jos. *AJ* 19.54).
- 18 Jos. *AJ* 19.248–49. The senators were summoned at night according to Josephus, presumably not long before dawn of the day following the assassination; on the evidence for the Temple of Jupiter Victor, see Coarelli 2012: 241–6.
- 19 Valerius Asiaticus almost certainly played no role in the actual assassination: see Malloch 2013: 59–60; on Asiaticus generally: 55–56.
- 20 Bergener 1965: 133; Timpe 1962: 89.
- 21 For a useful discussion of this passage: Swan 1970: 149–64.
- 22 Suet. *Galb.* 7.1; see Murison 1985: 254–6.
- 23 Rufius Pollio: Jos. *AJ*. 19.267. Catonius Iustus was Prefect in 43 at any rate, when he was put to death through Messalina (Sen. *Ap.* 13.5; Dio 60.18.3).
- 24 Jos. *AJ* 19.247 gives the sum as 5,000 drachmae (= 20,000 sesterces), Suet. *Claud.* 10.4 gives 15,000 sesterces. Suetonius claims that the donative was only promised on this occasion.
- 25 Jos. *AJ* 19.253.
- 26 Jos. *AJ* 19.263; Dio 60.1.4. In Jos. *BJ* 2.209, the senate rejects Claudius’ initial offer and Claudius sends back Agrippa with what is essentially a declaration of war, at which point the soldiers abandon the senate, whose resistance crumbles. On Pomponius’ role, see Timpe 1960: 490–1; Bergener 1965: 131.
- 27 Jos. *AJ*. 264. Wiseman 2013b: 96 suggests that Aponius might be the Aponius Saturninus who literally nodded off during one of Caligula’s auctions and thereby inadvertently bought thirteen gladiators for nine million sesterterii (Suet. *Cal.* 38.4).
- 28 Jos. *AJ* 19.272.
- 29 Jos. *AJ* 19.268–73; Suet. *Claud.* 11.1; Dio 60.3.4–5.
- 30 Tac. *Ann.* 11.29.1; Pliny *NH* 36.60; the Claudian physician, Scribonius Largus, dedicated his work on medicine to Callistus: Scrib. *Comp. praef.* 1. Jung 1972 suggests that Callistus had planned ahead for Claudius; Wiseman 2013b: 54 is sceptical; Dettenhofer 2003: 196 suggests that Callistus, among other, unnamed, individuals, had made available the financial means for Claudius’ donative to the praetorians.
- 31 On the possible role of Claudius in the assassination, see Jung 1972: 367–86; Levick 1990: 35; Campbell 1984: 81.
- 32 Suet. *Claud.* 11.3 speaks of a blanket abolition of the *acta* at the beginning of the new reign; Dio 60.4.1 suggests a piecemeal repeal as issues came up over time: the two are reconciled by Mommsen 1887–8: 2.1130, n. 5, Suetonius providing the policy and Dio its practical application, but see Wardle 1992a: 437–8. In the *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani* Caligula is omitted from those emperors providing precedents – presumably he was simply allowed to drop out. As the Tabula Banasitana shows (*CRAI* [1971], 468–90), he did remain in the official list of the emperors who made grants of Roman citizenship; such grants clearly remained valid.
- 33 Suet. *Claud.* 11.3; Dio 60.3.4, 4.5. On *damnatio memoriae*: Vittinghoff 1936: 102; Bleicken 1962: 104–5; Rollin 1979: 165.
- 34 Sen. *Apoc.* 11.2 depicts him as harrying Caligula even after death; see Ramage 1983: 202–6.
- 35 *ILS* 205 (Smallwood 308b); Dio 60.3.4, 8.6.
- 36 Suet. *Cal.* 22.1; Dio 60.6.8.
- 37 *ILS* 206.
- 38 Caligula: Dio 59.30.1a; 60.4.5; Agrippina: Dio 61.16.2a; Poppaea: Tac. *Ann.* 14.61.1. Dio 59.30.1a (epitome) speaks of the statues and images of Caligula being dragged

- down from their pedestals during the assassination, but this presumably refers to limited and spontaneous action on the part of the conspirators.
- 39 Bronze: Jucker 1982: 112; Boschung 1989: 91, 115; Pollini 2013: Figure 10; chin: Jucker 1982: 111; Boschung 1989: 120; head: Varner 2004: 24.
- 40 See Varner 2004: 25–34; 2008: 136–9; Freyer-Schauenburg 2004.
- 41 Varner 2004: 35–40.
- 42 Dio 60.6.8 says that Claudius put back Pompey’s name on the theatre. This implies that Caligula had placed his own name there.
- 43 Milan: *ILS* 194; Bologna: *ILS* 5674; Pompeii: *ILS* 6396–7; Dalmatia: *ILS* 5948, erased, 5949 intact (see Hedrick 2000: 112); Thugga (Africa), see Poinssot 1913: 45, n. 35; Samos: *IGR* 4.1721; Alexandria (Egypt): *IGR* 1.1057; Cyzicus: *IGR* 4.146; Rome: *CIL* 6.886; Hesberg and Panciera 1994: 3.2; a fascinating dedicatory inscription, *CIL* 11.4778 has survived from Spolietum, in the region where Vespasian’s family originated (Suet. *Vesp.* 1.2). The dedicator is a Polla, and the inscription has been restored so as to make the recipient Caligula (see Flower 2006: 150). But very few letters survive and the identification is far from certain.
- 44 Jonas 1937–8; Hinz, Hagen and Haupt 1966; Jucker 1982: 114–16; on a lead weight found in the sea near Corsica his abbreviated *praenomen* ‘C’ seems similarly to have been erased (*AE* 1992: 913).
- 45 Giard 1967; LeGall 1981; Zehnacker 1984.
- 46 Giard 1970: 56–60; MacDowall 1971; Martini 1980; Varner 2004: 24.
- 47 Dio 60.22.3; Wolters 1999: 86 notes the tradition that Mnester was performing the role of Cinyras on the day of Caligula’s death (Suet. *Cal.* 57.4, cf. Jos. *AJ* 19.94) and the possibility that the statues might be associated with that felicitous performance.
- 48 See Barrett 1999b; the frequency of Caligula’s coins is not a good guide on this issue; on the difficulties of determining frequency, see Noreña 2002. Szaivert 1984: 50 suggests that the continued minting of the Agrippa as (see [Chapter 15](#)) might have been intended to meet a resulting shortage of aes coinage; Wolters 1999: 85 notes the problem of the timing of the decree.
- 49 Callu and Panvini Rosati 1964: 51–90.
- 50 Bregar: Carson 1959. Carson cites 17 Tiberian aurei; two more are now known; Patras: Touratsoglou 1978; Pudukota: Hill 1898.
- 51 Richmond 1968: 93–103.
- 52 Nony 1981.
- 53 Stat. *Silv.* 4.9.23.
- 54 MacDowall 1968: 81.
- 55 Plut. *Galb.* 9.1.
- 56 Tac. *Hist.* 1.4.1; 1.78.2; 2.95; 5.1; Plut. *Otho* 7.1.
- 57 Suet. *Ner.* 57.2; Tac. *Hist.* 2.8–9; Dio 64.9.3; 66.19.3b–3c; Zonaras 11.15.45.

FIT TO RULE?

Can it be said that Caligula was fit, physically and mentally, for the role of emperor? That is a difficult enough question to pose about any ruler, even one with a clearly documented reign. Distortions in the historical tradition present major obstacles to a serious and reliable assessment of Caligula's reign, but despite those obstacles there can, in the end, surely be little doubt about how the question should be answered.

In his early years Caligula suffered from delicate health. He was apparently prone to epileptic fits, and Augustus was concerned enough about him during his infancy to appoint two doctors to accompany him when he travelled north in AD 14 to join his parents (although this may well simply be the excessive behaviour of a fussy grandparent). As he grew older, his physical strength gradually improved, but fainting fits still at times made it difficult for him to walk or stay standing up.¹ There are signs that he continued to be troubled by various ailments as an adult, such as his serious illness in 38, and his more trivial stomach ache on the day of his death (through overeating), but he was certainly hearty enough to make the arduous journey north in 39, and to amuse himself racing chariots in his own private racecourse in Rome.

It is clear that he was highly strung and nervous. This manifested itself whenever he spoke in public. His words and ideas would pour out, and in delivering a speech he would become so excited that he could not help moving about on the platform. During theatrical performances he would get carried away, and join in, adding his own words and gestures. It comes as no surprise to learn that he suffered from insomnia (to which Augustus also was prone). Suetonius claims that he never managed more than three hours sleep in any one night, and would wander through his apartments calling for the dawn. Even when he did manage to drift into sleep, it was fitful and disturbed by vivid nightmares. Consequently he would sometimes nod off at dinner parties.² Some of the accounts of his nervousness may be well grounded. During storms, Suetonius tells us, Caligula would hide under the bed. Many people behaved similarly in those times. Augustus, for instance, supposedly hid in an underground room during thunderstorms, and Tiberius was said to be so terrified by storms that he wore a laurel wreath, in the belief, fortunately almost

certainly never put to the test, that it offered protection against lightning. We also learn that during an eruption of Aetna, Caligula fled in panic from the city of Messana, which was perhaps only sensible. But some of the stories seem absurd, such as the bizarre report that he was so panic stricken on news of a defeat in Germany that he fitted out a fleet to escape from Rome and seek refuge in the provinces.³

During the nineteenth century the prevalent scholarly view of Caligula, particularly common among German scholars, was that he was more than just nervous and excitable, but that he was in fact a totally deranged lunatic, so depraved and cruel that his actions could not be judged by the norms of human behaviour. The most celebrated study of this type is *Caligula. Eine Studie der römische Cäsarwahnsinn* published in Leipzig in 1894 by the noted pacifist and Nobel laureate Ludwig Quidde. Although allegedly an exposé of Caligula's craziness it was in fact intended as a very thinly veiled attack on the political excesses of the German emperor Wilhelm II (the 'Kaiser').⁴ The notion of mental incompetence is, admittedly, reflected to some degree in the ancient sources, and there was clearly an ancient tradition that explained Caligula's behaviour as resulting from madness, perhaps caused by some external agent. Both Josephus and Suetonius report the belief, echoed in the poet Juvenal, that Caesonia sent him mad with an aphrodisiac. This claim is difficult to reconcile with other stories of his sexual prowess, and perhaps arose to explain Caesonia's strange hold over her husband.⁵ It is the stereotypical women's weapon. When Plautius Silvanus threw his wife out of the window in a fit of insanity in Tiberius' reign, his former wife Numantina was charged with administering philtres, or alternatively magical charms. Antony was besotted by Cleopatra because he was drugged, with witchcraft thrown in as an alternative. Lucretius was similarly said to have been sent mad by a love philtre, and wrote his great work in his lucid moments.⁶

Generally the ancient sources use language that could be taken to indicate madness. Tacitus does refer to Caligula's *turbida mens* ('chaotic mind'). But his intention is to emphasise how his febrile mental state did not prevent him from being an eloquent speaker. Had Tacitus wanted to refer to 'diminished mental capacity' he could have used language that conveys the notion unambiguously, as when he cites *imminuta mens* as an explanation for the perceived disqualification of Claudius as a potential emperor. Similarly Josephus uses *mania* of Caligula, but he applies the same word to the conduct of the Jewish leaders Aristobulus and Hyrcanus in their dealings with Pompey. Suetonius suggests that Caligula was mentally unsound, but the story that he recognised his own mental infirmity and thought of retiring to purge his brain is probably an echo of one of Caligula's own jokes.⁷ We are fortunate to have two contemporary writers who had known him personally: Seneca and Philo. Since both are extremely hostile, Seneca largely for personal reasons, Philo because of his profound religious convictions, they would surely have missed no opportunity to describe any display of madness. Seneca goes out of his way to paint Caligula in the darkest possible colours, dwelling in particular on his savagery and brutality. Moreover he uses terms appropriate to

the vocabulary of insanity, such as *dementia*, *furiosa inconstantia* or *conturbatus*. The difficulty is that in their contexts these Senecan expressions denote not so much madness as excessively arrogant or even foolish behaviour. Seneca called even Alexander the Great *vesanus* (mad) and *furibundus* (wild).⁸ For all his deep antipathy towards Caligula, Seneca attributes to him not a single specific act that could be described as insane, in the strict clinical sense of the word. In fact, one incident, although described by Seneca as a display of *dementia*, provides an excellent check on the stories of his madness in the other sources. Suetonius claims that he would hold conversations with the statue of Jupiter in the temple on the Capitoline, and would sometimes challenge the god with the line used by Ajax in the famous wrestling match in Homer's *Iliad*, when, to break the deadlock with Odysseus, he called out 'Lift me, or I'll lift you!' Dio tells the same story in a different form, in the context of Caligula's thunder-machine, a device that echoed thunderclaps when it thundered and gave out flashes when there was lightning. To the accompaniment of this, whenever a bolt fell, Caligula would hurl a javelin at a rock and shout out that very same challenge. Seneca, writing for an audience that may well have participated in the event, brings us down to earth with a sober account of what probably did happen. Caligula had been planning to put on a theatrical show of some sort (perhaps echoed in Dio's thunder-machine), and was looking forward to performing in it personally, when the whole set was suddenly washed out by a thunderstorm. His reaction was to yell out the familiar challenging words. Thus what is presented in the later sources as an instance of Caligula's lunacy, turns out to be little more than a blasphemous outburst uttered in anger (or mock anger), a common enough human response to sudden bad weather ruining a special treat.⁹ Of course, after the assassination it would have suited Claudius' agenda if the earliest accounts of Caligula's reign had explained his egregious behaviour through the language of mental incapacity.

To Philo, Caligula was a madman, but he was bound to appear as such to a devout Jew, given that he threatened to expropriate the Temple of Jerusalem for his own worship. Philo is especially valuable because he is the only source to provide us with an eyewitness account of Caligula's behaviour as late as the autumn of 40, a short period before his death. At their meeting, Philo was convinced that he was dealing with a lunatic, but, viewed dispassionately, the scene he describes as a participant presents an almost engaging Caligula, with a sharp sense of malevolent humour, a penchant for engaging in clever verbal badinage, a man who knows that his audience is afraid of him and plays on this knowledge, disconcerting his company by making them follow after him from room to room (see below). Even Philo admits that by the time the audience was finished Caligula had adopted a milder tone (*pros to malakoteron*).¹⁰ Though the intention of Philo's account is to depict Caligula as unhinged, the final impression is not of someone who suffered an incapacitating psychosis, but rather of a conceited, ill mannered and irresponsible young ruler having wicked fun at other people's expense.

In this century the scholarly tendency has been to move away from the simplistic notion of 'madness' without further qualification (still firmly rooted

in the popular mind). One approach has been to attempt a more sophisticated quasi-clinical diagnosis of his mental condition (see also [Chapter 5](#)). This process may be said to have originated in Hans Sachs, *Bubi. Die Lebensgeschichte des Caligula*, published in 1930, a fairly uncritical compendium of Suetonius and Dio, but dressed up in modern psychological garb. Among more recent studies, it has been argued that Caligula was schizophrenic, or that he was schizoid, only veering towards schizophrenia, and that he suffered from psychopathy.¹¹ Such approaches are surely questionable. Even under the best clinical conditions psychoanalysis is a complex and difficult procedure. It seems particularly dangerous to seek to analyse a 'patient' through symptoms reported by hearsay, by writers who are in the main several generations separated from the object of study, and, most seriously of all, have an established record of recounting exactly the kind of titillating gossip that would encourage later analysts to assume mental instability. The sources for the career of Caligula provide difficulties enough for the traditional historian; they present an insurmountable obstacle for the would-be psychoanalyst. There is a wide range of abnormal and aberrant mental behaviour, and it is impossible to tell the point in the range that the sources are trying to convey, especially since they do not properly distinguish between madness and non-normative behaviour.¹²

There are two fatal objections to any attempt to psychoanalyse Caligula in any depth from such a remove. One is that many of the acts of sadistic cruelty he is supposed to have committed are part and parcel of the standard profile of the stock tyrant and are accordingly highly suspect.¹³ Perhaps even more problematic is that much of what has been attributed to him may well have originated in his own ironical view of the world, not fully understood in his time, and much distorted in the tradition.¹⁴ He clearly had a highly developed sense of the absurd, resulting in a form of humour that was often cruel, sadistic and malicious, and which made its impact essentially by cleverly scoring points over those who were in no position to respond in kind.¹⁵ Helicon, it will be remembered, became one of Caligula's favourites because he was so clever with wickedly cruel jokes. Inevitably many of Caligula's quips must have been much funnier at the time, but this has also to be said of most ancient witticisms, and their reception would have been aided by captive and effusively appreciative audiences. Caligula's humour seems invariably to have been in bad taste, and it is hardly surprising that it has been used to create such a negative impression of him. When a man thought rich, for example, was eliminated for his money, but turned out to own nothing, Caligula reputedly commented, 'He died in vain.' When selecting prisoners from a row to be put to death, he pointed to their line, with a bald man at either end, and said 'From the bald-headed one to the bald-headed one', an expression that may have been proverbial. Some of the jokes are a little more subtle, involving literary allusions or a clever use of language, such as his description of Livia as 'a Ulysses in a stola' ([Chapter 2](#)), and his play on the name Frugi (literally 'frugal') when, at a banquet, he set out an expensive course and said that a man should either be 'Frugi' or 'Caesar'.¹⁶

The best description of Caligula in a cruelly jocular mood is provided by Philo's account of his meeting with the embassies from Alexandria in 40, mentioned above. It took place at Caligula's residence on the Esquiline, and Philo has left us a first-hand account of what transpired. As the Jews, confused and terrified, scurried behind him, Caligula rushed around the villa, inspecting the furnishings and fittings, and on occasion ordering replacements for those that did not meet his high standards. His good spirits were no doubt enhanced by the appreciative audience of hangers-on. Caligula was clearly at his most impish, and Philo's overall observation that *to pragma mimeia tis en* ('the affair was a kind of farce') must evoke some sympathy. The hearings were conducted as work was taking place on the palace and the delegations were obliged to rush from room to room, following the emperor as he moved briskly about, giving instructions to the decorators on the furnishings and fittings. The place, according to Philo, was something between a *theatron kai desmoterion* ('a theatre and a prison'). To the great amusement of the Greeks, Caligula greeted the Jews with the mock pedantic term *theomiseis* ('haters of the gods'), because they could not recognise his divinity. The Jews were clearly impervious to his malicious brand of humour. They took him seriously and protested that they had demonstrated their loyalty by making sacrifices. This provoked a piece of wordplay, that the sacrifices had been *for* him but not *to* him, and *ti oun ophelos?* ('what use is that?'); the rejoinder's joke escaped them and in fact reportedly terrified them.¹⁷ When he asked 'Why don't you eat pork?' everyone, apart from the Jews, burst into loud peals of laughter, and Philo admits that their amusement was at least in part genuine. The precise point of the joke, so well received, is lost to us, since we do not know what had immediately preceded. But the Wildean character of his follow-up is readily apparent. When the Jews pointed out that in avoiding pork they were not exceptional, since other communities had dietary prohibitions against familiar foods, such as lamb, 'Quite right, too', was his reply. 'It isn't nice!' When they finally came to the serious question at issue, the political rights of the Jews, Caligula pretended only to half-listen, absorbed more in the window arrangements of one room or the pictures to be hung in another. By the end of the meeting the Jews were in despair. They clearly did not appreciate that Caligula was essentially amusing himself at their expense, and continued to do so right up to the close of proceedings, when he ended with the observation that they should be considered unfortunate lunatics rather than criminals, for not believing that he was a god. That was the last communication that the delegation received from the emperor, and the hearings ended without any decision.

As patently happens in this account of Philo's, Caligula's cruel and ironical squibs must have been turned against him by the almost uniformly hostile sources, and they probably lie at the heart of many of the uncomplimentary anecdotes about him. His *bons mots* would be taken from their original contexts and repeated with whatever negative slant would create the most prejudicial impression of him. His supposed plans to set up house next door to Jupiter, to flay Apelles (as a hybrid Greco-Latin word the name would mean 'skinless'), to eliminate whole legions on the Rhine, probably have their roots in sardonic and sarcastic banter. It is

very likely the case that the most famous incident of Caligula's reign arose from some malign quip: it is a popular notion that Caligula made his horse consul, and this had become a byword for the promotion of incompetents, especially in the political sphere. The earliest instance seems to be Gladstone's comment in 1880, when Disraeli elevated his secretary Montagu Lowry-Corry to the peerage as Baron Rowton, that it was the most remarkable appointment since Caligula made his horse consul. But, as so often happens, the sources do not in fact say what subsequent generations have always claimed: Suetonius comments that *it is reported (traditur)* (hence, by implication, that he cannot vouch for the veracity of the report) that he *designated* his horse for the consulship (*consulatum quoque destinasse*); Dio similarly says that he *promised (prosupichneito)* to make him consul and would certainly have done so if he had lived long enough. For good measure, Dio adds in another context that he appointed Incitatus to a priesthood. It seems almost certain that this famous anecdote has its origins in a facetious observation on the quality of senatorial candidates for the consulship and an unfavourable and cruelly humorous comparison of their and Incitatus' competence for the office.¹⁸ The same maliciously humorous intent may be discerned in the information of Suetonius that Caligula *threatened* that he would introduce a measure to prevent any lawyer from giving an opinion that he disagreed with, which was tantamount to abolishing the legal profession. Again, this is something that was supposedly to come in the future, but was not actually enacted.¹⁹

Caligula's barbs were directed at every available target, at himself (the suggestion that he would retire to purge his brain), and at members of his own family. This latter group of dark witticisms, in particular, have been much misunderstood, and casual references in Suetonius, not generally reflected in the other sources, have been inflated out of all proportion to their significance. Caligula's public devotion to his family, to his parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters is well established in the sources. When in 40 he informed the senatorial embassy that none of his family was to receive honours his anger was clearly directed against his two surviving sisters, and perhaps his uncle Claudius, as a direct and specific response to the treachery he had exposed. To generalise from the specific and take it as an injunction against his ancestors, his wife Caesonia, his daughter, is surely perverse. Moreover, it is clearly dangerous to read any serious or profound intentions in isolated comments reported almost *en passant* by Suetonius.²⁰ As noted in the Introduction, Suetonius mentions that Caligula refused to be thought of as the grandson of Marcus Agrippa because of that man's humble origins, and became angry if anyone spoke of him as his ancestor. To top this he supposedly claimed that his mother Agrippina (daughter of Agrippa) had been born as a result of incest between Augustus and his daughter Julia.²¹ That this must have resulted from a misunderstanding of some quip in poor taste rather than a serious attempt by Caligula to disassociate himself from Marcus Agrippa, is suggested by a letter from Herod Agrippa to Caligula, where Agrippa praises his namesake and refers to him as the grandfather of Caligula.²² The numismatic and epigraphic records indicate the same. On the funerary urn that contained the remains of



Figure 14.1 Agrippa as (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

Caligula's mother Agrippina, in the Mausoleum of Augustus, her relationship to Agrippa is clearly stated: *ossa Agrippinae M. Agrippae [f.] divi Aug. neptis...* ('the bones of Agrippina, daughter of Marcus Agrippa, granddaughter of Divus Augustus'). A statue base of the Caligulan period at Aphrodisias also identifies Agrippina as the daughter of Marcus Agrippa and mother of Caligula. At Mytilene, dedications to Agrippa and others were made under Caligula.²³ The 'Agrippa as', bearing the head of Agrippa on the obverse, is now recognised as having been minted throughout Caligula's reign, and is, in fact, his commonest coin (*Figure 14.1*). It is imitated in the local issues of the colony of Caesaraugusta in Spain, and the same mint produced dupondii with the head of Agrippina, with the filiation *MF* (*Marci Filia*), 'daughter of Marcus (Agrippa)' (*Chapter 15*). Moreover, the official sestertius series from the Rome mint, honouring Agrippina, undated but clearly belonging to Caligula's reign (she is identified as 'Mother of Gaius Caesar'), has the same filiation, *MF* (*Marci Filia*) (*Figure 4.7*). One copper piece of Caligula, classed by Grant as a medallion, depicts Caligula's head on the obverse and is accompanied by the legend *C. Caesar Germanici F. M. Agrippae N.* (Gaius Caesar, son of Germanicus, grandson of Marcus Agrippa).²⁴ If, as Suetonius states, Caligula did get angry with anyone who spoke of his Agrippan ancestry, that may simply because it took the focus away from his Augustan lineage.

Similar misinformation is promoted about his attitude towards other members of the family. Suetonius claims that Caligula tried to cast a slur on the memory of Augustus by forbidding the celebration of the battles of Actium and Sicily. The notion that Caligula tried to distance himself from Augustus is absurd, and totally disproved by the great weight of the literary evidence, and by the emphasis that he constantly places on his descent from Augustus in his coins and inscriptions. Some scholars have read profound implications into the idea that Caligula decided to promote himself as the grandson of Antony rather than of Augustus,

and consequently punished the consuls for celebrating the victory at Actium. It is suggested that Caligula's dream of absolutism had been inspired by Antony's example, or that his support of Antony was a propaganda tool to help effect a conciliation between the eastern and western parts of the empire.²⁵ Yet when the Actium incident is considered more closely it appears far less significant. Dio reports that Caligula's posing as a descendant of Antony rather than of Augustus was simply a pretext. The emperor reputedly told his closest advisers that he was determined to find fault with the consuls, and that if they had *not* celebrated Actium he would have used that as an excuse to get rid of them. Dio's cynicism is borne out by the Arval record. It shows that in 38 Caligula carried out sacrifices on August 1 at the Temple of Augustus, as part of the festival constituted in 30 BC to mark the final defeat of Antony. There is not a single scrap of numismatic or epigraphic evidence to show any special favour for Antony. Certainly, a few months after the incident of the dismissed consuls, Caligula showed little sentimentality about Antony's memory and sold at auction one of his possessions, seized as spoil by Augustus.²⁶ The Arval records show that the birthdays of Augustus, Livia, Tiberius and Antonia were all celebrated during Caligula's reign. Antony's birthday fell on January 14. The Arval record for the early part of 38 has survived and shows unmistakably that Antony's birthday was *not* celebrated, at least not in that year. Suetonius reports that Caligula's successor, Claudius, honoured Mark Antony, insisting that the birthday of Drusus, his father, be celebrated all the more vigorously because it fell on the same day as Antony's. This seems to be presented as a novelty, without any hint that Caligula had preceded Claudius in granting these honours.²⁷ Similarly, Suetonius' general claim that Caligula treated Claudius *totally (non nisi)* as a *ludibrium* ('laughing stock') is disproved by the facts, given that under him Claudius for the first time received the consulship and entry into the senate, as well as a special place at the games.²⁸ It is also difficult to know what to make of Suetonius' report that Caligula charged in a letter that Livia was of low birth, and that her grandfather, Aufidius Lurco, had been only a local official in Fundi. Suetonius responds that Lurco had actually held offices in Rome. But in fact inscriptions show that Suetonius is totally confused, and that Livia's grandfather was a Marcus Alfidius, probably from Marruvium.²⁹

Another approach to the problem of Caligula's personality has been to see him as a man obsessed by oriental ideas and customs. This is an area where the scholarly imagination has often allowed itself excessively free rein, and claims have been made that, in their outrageousness, outdo anything that Caligula could devise. The source of his supposed inspiration varies. During his bouts of insomnia Caligula would invite the full moon to his embraces, probably an example of his mischievous humour, but the incident has been used as evidence for his adherence to oriental cults.³⁰ Lugand argued that Caligula was a Mazdaean who prepared for his future travels with the sun with a rehearsal at Baiae. The Mazdaeans sacrificed to the sun, and Incitatus, the intended victim, was kept in much comfort to be prepared for his apotheosis.³¹ The source of inspiration favoured by most modern scholars, however, is Egypt, and some of the supposed manifestations of

his mania for that country are richly imaginative. Gag  , for instance, observed that the first day of the Egyptian year was Thot, August 30, just before Caligula's birthday, and asserts that the emperor must have gone through life conscious of this – perhaps the punishment of the consuls in 39 for the celebration of Actium in September was because the anniversary came close to Thot. Lambrechts has argued that Caligula's aversion to Homer may result from the poet's use of the traditional account of Helen, rather than the Egyptian version that she stayed in Egypt and never went to Troy. The fullest treatment of the theme, however, is that of K  berlein, who insists that the guiding principle for the whole of Caligula's reign is an adherence to the religious and political traditions of Egypt.³² Thus the amnesty at the beginning of the reign is supposedly inspired by the example of the pharaohs, Caligula's departure from Rome is in imitation of the departure of Isis after the death of Osiris, and the recovery of his mother's ashes is modelled on Isis' similar service for Osiris.

The most frequently cited example of Caligula's mania for things Egyptian is the story of his incest with Drusilla. This, it is claimed, was dictated by Pharaonic or Ptolemaic practices, which condoned marriage between the siblings of the royal dynasty in order to preserve the sacred bloodline.³³ Yet apart from the general scepticism that we should apply to stories of Caligula's supposed incest, two specific, if mundane, objections arise. The first is that Caligula's dalliance with Drusilla is originally said to have been exposed during the emperor's youth at the home of Antonia, well before there was any serious prospect of his becoming princeps. Also, an obsession with the purity of the bloodline is hard to reconcile with the two husbands of Drusilla and the four wives of Caligula. It is in fact worth noting that there is only a *single* explicit allusion in the sources to Caligula's supposed predilection for Egypt: his supposed plan to move his capital to Alexandria. Even this example is not compelling. Philo reports it only as a rumour, while Suetonius is not sure whether he intended to move to Alexandria or the very Italian town of Antium. In any case, Alexandria was to the Romans the epitome of oriental corruption, and a charge that Caligula was aiming to relocate there was an easy way to discredit him. The very same accusation had earlier been levelled against Caesar and Antony, and would later be made against Nero.³⁴

It is often claimed Caligula was a devotee of the worship of Isis.³⁵ The main evidence for this is Josephus' statement that he was celebrating some unspecified mysteries on the day that he died and that he enjoyed dressing up in women's clothing and wig, which is taken to suggest his performing as a priest of Isis in a long robe.³⁶ It is also suggested that he might have been responsible for building an Isaeum on the Campus Martius. There was a Temple of Isis there by 65, to which the poet Lucan alludes, but its adscription to Caligula is founded on little more than the aversion to Egyptian cults displayed by Augustus and Tiberius.³⁷ The date of the Roman festival of Isis may provide a clue to its establishment. The fourth century calendar of Philocalus records the festival of Isis as beginning in Rome on October 28; its Egyptian prototype began on Hathyr 17. Now Philocalus seems to have based his Roman date on the correlation of Hathyr 17 in the 'old' pre-

Julian Egyptian calendar, which survived in Egypt alongside the reformed Julian version and whose dates, lacking a leap year, shift one day every four years relative to the Julian. Hathyr 17 happened to fall on October 28 in the years 40–43. Thus if the institution of the festival of Isis in Rome coincides with the building of the Isaeum (though admittedly this is far from certain), the chronological data would suit a Claudian just as well as a Caligulan foundation.³⁸ There is also a piece of spurious archaeological evidence. The supposed Isiac chapel (the '*Aula Isiaca*'), incorporated into the substructures of the later Flavian palace on the Palatine, has been assumed by many scholars to have been commissioned originally by Caligula, because of his interest in Isis. It consists of a long apsidal room with wall paintings with symbolic Egyptian motifs, often thought to depict Isis or one of her priestesses.³⁹ Unfortunately for the theory, it is now known that the paintings preceded his reign by at least half a century, since the paintings are of the late Second Style and thus datable to around 25 BC, and in any case may not even have an Isiac theme. There is evidence of an earlier phase to the structure, which some scholars believe belonged to Mark Antony.⁴⁰ They can have no bearing whatsoever on Caligula's attitude towards Isis or Egyptian civilisation generally.

It would, of course, be foolish to deny that Caligula might have had an interest in the culture and civilisation of Egypt. Certainly on the day of his death he was supposed to have been preparing a *pervigilium* in which mystery scenes from the underworld were represented, involving Egyptians and Ethiopians.⁴¹ But Romans in general were fascinated by things Egyptian.⁴² Roman art and architecture from Augustus' time on reflects this. The famous pyramid tomb of Gaius Cestius was built some time before 12 BC, and Egyptian obelisks were erected by Augustus himself in various places, most notably at the entrance to his own mausoleum and as part of his sundial in the Campus Martius. Pliny the Elder speaks of the passion for personal adornments from Egypt in his own day, reporting that 'now indeed even men are beginning to wear on their fingers Harpocrates and figures of Egyptian deities'.⁴³ Caligula's own father was not immune to this fascination. When Germanicus travelled to Egypt in the winter of 18/19 his purpose, apart from the administrative imperatives, was to study its antiquity (*cognoscendae antiquitatis... cura*).⁴⁴ There is no reason to think that Caligula would have been averse to these trends, but there is simply no evidence to show that any possible interest developed into a mania. Nor, of course, would Claudius have been immune, and we cannot assume that Caligula's successor would have been averse to the revival of the worship of Isis, or to the building of the Isaeum in the Campus Martius. The famous Mensa Isiaca, a bronze tablet inlaid in silver with divine figures and pseudo-hieroglyphs was presumably made for a Roman sanctuary, and can be dated to the reign of Claudius, whose name was added in hieroglyphs in a cartouche.⁴⁵

It has also been asserted that Caligula would have been especially vulnerable to oriental ideas of autocracy because of the time that he spent with his grandmother Antonia and with the client kings from the east that he met as a child.⁴⁶ It would not be surprising if Antonia did indeed teach him something of the importance

of the eastern client kingdoms in the overall imperial system, and this guidance may have influenced him when he became emperor. But she was perhaps the most responsible and level-headed of the whole Julio-Claudian dynasty, and it seems inconceivable that she would have sought to fill Caligula's young head with dangerous ideas of oriental despotism. Claudius lived with Antonia (she was his mother) much longer than did Caligula and was exposed to the same influences, but did not have his mind warped. Caligula did not need oriental rulers to inspire him, as Suetonius puts it, to transform the principate into a monarchy.⁴⁷ Nor did he need Herod Agrippa and Antiochus of Commagene as teachers of tyranny. The senate, by conferring absolute authority on him in 37, gave the callow and inexperienced youth all the powers a despot might seek. No doubt, as his reign progressed, Caligula would have been influenced by his friends from the Hellenised east, and this could explain his interest in such things as his exotic clothing. It is certainly the case that Hellenistic rulers had played a significant role in Rome's evolving experience, and had engaged the attention of Caligula's forebears.⁴⁸ The eastern client kings may very well have offered a precedent for the *style* of absolutism. But the main drive to attain its reality was entirely his own, nurtured by a cooperative senate.

In fact, Caligula's most substantial and positive achievements arguably arose from his dealings with the client kings, and in his arrangements for the eastern part of the empire he was able to display the most creative application of his autocratic powers. He seems to have been focused primarily on preserving stability, rather than with extending Roman *imperium* (that more aggressive policy would be pursued in the north), and client rulers were an excellent means to this end. His appointments were very personal, but not allowed to become familiar. Even his closest friend, Herod Agrippa, the most prominent of these rulers, was careful not to presume in his relations with the emperor. Suetonius tells an anecdote of visiting kings who attended a banquet with Caligula, and who, in the casual after-dinner conversation, gave the impression that they felt they were all fellow monarchs, drawing from Caligula a rebuke in the form of a line of Homer: 'Let there be one master, let there be one King.'⁴⁹ Personal considerations apart, he generally chose rulers who served Rome loyally.⁵⁰ Among his arrangements an otherwise unknown Sohaemus was created ruler of Iturea; he was perhaps related to the Sohaemus who succeeded to the throne of Emesa in the first year of Nero's reign. Mithridates, son of Gepaiyris, was confirmed in his position as ruler of the Bosphorus, where he served Rome's interests well.⁵¹ Antiochus of Commagene recovered his father's old kingdom, earlier organised into a Roman province by Germanicus, as well as territory in Cilicia.⁵² He also received 100 million sesterces for the taxes and other revenues that had accumulated during the twenty years that had elapsed since his father's death – by AD 69 he was reputed to be the richest of the client kings.⁵³ Along with Agrippa, Antiochus was associated in the minds of the Romans as Caligula's 'tutor in tyranny'. Unfortunately, the sources say nothing about Antiochus' early relationship with the young emperor, but it must have been friendly, since Antiochus was one of the first rulers to receive

benefits after the accession. His links with Agrippa and his presence in Gaul do suggest that he might in fact have enjoyed Caligula's special friendship, and it was possibly in honour of the emperor that he founded a new city in Cetus in Cilicia, which he named Germanicopolis.⁵⁴

The great importance of personal ties is well illustrated by the fortunes of the three sons of the late Cotys, the murdered king of Thrace, sent as boys to Rome on the death of their father. They became friends of Caligula's, very possibly in Antonia's house. Eighteen years later, a year after Caligula had come to power, the three young men were rewarded by the bestowal of client kingdoms that exceeded by far their simple Thracian inheritance. Their investiture took place in AD 38 in a splendid ceremony in the forum at Rome. Rhoemetalcès III received the whole of his father's dominions in Thrace as sole ruler. Polemo II was awarded Pontus, the 'ancestral domain' of their grandfather, Polemo I, on the Black Sea. Cotys was made ruler of Armenia Minor, which had also once belonged to Polemo I, and, Dio cryptically states, was later granted part of Arabia also.⁵⁵ We have no details on how they ruled, but no crises are reported in their territories during Caligula's reign. Polemo, at any rate, proved to be one of the most loyal and durable of the client kings, surviving until Nero's reign, when he provided help to Corbulo in the Parthian campaigns. The arrangements that Caligula made in the east in fact reflect the one talent that he clearly did seem to possess as an administrator, the ability to choose competent subordinates. This ability is manifested in other areas also: the legates Petronius in Syria and Galba in Germany, for instance, were outstanding appointments. The eastern client kings, often personal friends of the emperor, and in most cases connected with their old kingdoms by a complex nexus of political marriages, were similarly well chosen. Certainly Claudius was generally willing to maintain the *status quo*, and to leave his predecessor's choices in place.

Caligula does seem to have taken a broad interest in the empire outside the boundaries of Italy, although it is risky to draw definitive conclusions from a reign as brief as his. His stay in Gaul marked the first visit of an emperor to one of the provinces in over half a century. In recruiting men to the equestrian order he made a point of bringing in candidates from throughout the empire. The large-scale extension of citizenship to provincials, which began under Julius Caesar, had come almost to a stop under Tiberius. It had resumed by the time of Claudius, but there are indications that the process may actually have been started again under Caligula, who is recorded as taking an interest in the problem of bogus claims for citizenship.⁵⁶ Suetonius presents Caligula's actions as a violation of agreements made earlier by Caesar and Augustus, by disenfranchising the descendants of enfranchised citizens. In fact Caligula might have been trying to impose a rule that had been ignored. He reportedly took a strong line and limited citizenship to sons, not later generations. This seems like an attempt to disenfranchise legal citizens but it is possible that grants of citizenship made earlier by Octavian were in fact limited to the recipients and their children, not to their posterity, the later practice. The substance of an edict made by Octavian in 31 BC has survived in the papyrus

copy of an appeal made by a legionary veteran, Marcus Valens, against a forced draft to take part in the collection of taxes. It shows that Octavian granted certain immunities to veterans, including Valens, including protection against forced military service and compulsory public obligations, and these immunities were extended specifically to his parents, his wife and his children. It is possible that similar restrictions were placed on citizenship grants.⁵⁷ There is some statistical data that suggests that Caligula was open to absorption of provincials into the Roman system. The first equestrian from Africa appears in this reign, and, in the proportion of equestrians of provincial to Italian origin, Caligula is seen to have been more receptive than his predecessors to the acceptance of provincials, although less so than Claudius, whose record in this area was famously liberal.⁵⁸

Philo cites a supposed letter of Herod Agrippa, where the king notes that Caligula had bestowed citizenship on the cities of some of his favourites. These might have included Vienne, in Narbonese Gaul, the birthplace of the emperor's friend Valerius Asiaticus; this city had honoured Caligula with statues even before his accession. At some point before 48 there was a change in its status, when it seems to have acquired the standing of a *colonia*, with the benefits of full citizenship, a development that is generally attributed to Caligula.⁵⁹ Certainly, however, there can be no doubting the awe in which Caligula was held by the prominent Gauls, who were willing to pay as much as 200,000 sesterces for an invitation to dine with him. It has also been suggested that the closing of the Spanish mints, observable in Caligula's reign, might be part of a process to unify and centralise the empire, by replacing local coins with 'official' issues, at any rate in the west.⁶⁰ It may also have been under Caligula that certain military districts of the empire were organised as provinces. The Alpine district of Raetia had been left by Tiberius with one detachment of troops under a military Prefect. It appears afterwards to have been joined with the Alpes Penninae under a civilian procurator. In an inscription, Quintus Caecilius Septicius is called *procurator Augustorum* and the *prolegatus* of the province of Raetia and Vindelicia, and the vallis Poenina; the archaic spelling used, such as '*provinciai Raitiai*', suggests a Claudian date for when it was written: the fact that he served as procurator under more than one emperor (*Augustorum*) implies that he was appointed by Caligula, or perhaps even by Tiberius.⁶¹ The same arrangement has been suggested for Noricum, the mountainous area south of the Danube. In the provincial capital of Virinum in the Magdelensburg in Noricum two marble moulds for gold casting have been discovered with the legend of *C(aii) Caesaris Aug(usti) Germanici imp(eratoris) ex Noric(is metallis)* from the Norican mines. The gold was under imperial control and would have ended up in the imperial patrimonium. The mining and smelting, and transportation to Rome, would have involved a complex logistical operation, all of which suggests a fairly sophisticated level of administration. The status of Noricum in the early empire is difficult to determine; it was probably taken over by Augustus at the same time as Raetia in 15 BC and certainly was under firm imperial control under Caligula, although some claim that it was an autonomous client state until Claudius.⁶²

In Rome itself any talent that Caligula might have possessed for administration would probably have been most severely tested in his handling of financial affairs. It is, however, very difficult to evaluate the financial policies of any of the Julio-Claudian emperors, largely because of the uncertainty about the division between the income of the emperor as head of state, and of the emperor as private individual. By the late empire the emperor's *fiscus* ('chest') was a kind of imperial treasury. In the first two centuries it could imply state funds that were under imperial control, but in Caligula's time it strictly referred to the emperor's personal wealth.⁶³ Given the overlap between their personal and public finances it is hardly surprising that the emperors made little attempt at formal accounting. Augustus presented *rationes* (balance sheets) on two occasions, each time when he feared that he was near death. The first occurred during his serious illness in 23 BC, and just before he died he presented another. Tiberius apparently gave only one report to the senate, in AD 33. The practice was revived by Caligula at the beginning of his reign, for which he won much praise, but there is no evidence that he repeated the process in later years.⁶⁴ The account that he published in 37 revealed a considerable surplus, which Suetonius reports as 2,700 million sesterces, Dio as 2,300 or 3,300 million.⁶⁵ Again, it is not clear what these figures actually represent, and the discrepancies may well result from confusion over the precise status of the imperial *fiscus* (if they do not simply reflect corruption in the manuscript tradition). On one point both sources are in agreement, that Caligula found no problem in spending this carefully accumulated surplus, an achievement apparently much admired by Nero.⁶⁶

Some of Caligula's expenditures would have been necessitated by his own extravagance. He clearly spent a vast fortune on his lavish way of life, even if we make allowance for the inevitable exaggeration of the sources. He engaged in a costly building programme, and constructed fine villas throughout Campania. It is claimed, clearly in exaggerated terms, that he dined on one occasion at a cost of 10 million sesterces, reputedly equal to the annual revenues of three provinces. He had a habit of giving money away irresponsibly. It was of course a time-honoured tradition for the emperor to be generous, but with discretion. As Millar notes, 'The maintenance of the emperor's rule demanded not only a constant outflow of gifts, but the giving of them in a magnanimous and dignified manner.' Some of his gifts were in this category. When a devastating fire destroyed much of Rome's Aemiliana district in October 38 he not only assisted directly in putting it out but made up the losses of those who suffered. This was imperial behaviour at its traditional best. But often Caligula's manner was far from 'dignified'. He lavished gifts on friends, actors, gladiators and chariot drivers. He reputedly gave the men who played ball with him 100,000 each. Lucius Caecilius, presented with only 50,000, is said to have queried, 'Do I play one-handed?' Few could have refused the money, and only one is on record as having done so. When Caligula tried to give Demetrius the Cynic 200,000 sesterces (probably proverbial for a very large sum – coincidentally it is the amount that wealthy Gauls had forked out for a dinner invitation, see above),

it is said that the philosopher retorted that if the emperor wanted to bribe him he would have to offer him his whole kingdom.⁶⁷

It is only fair to note that the healthy balance accrued by Tiberius was in part illusory. His frugality had left Caligula with certain obligations. The legacies of Livia had not been paid, for example, and a number of building projects remained incomplete. Thus it has to be recognised that the new reign did begin with several liabilities. In the settlement of Tiberius' will, the people received a bequest of 45 million. This was probably distributed to them in a *congiarium*, held on June 1, when each was given 300 sesterces. A second *congiarium* followed on July 19, when an extra 240 sesterces was presented to everyone to make up for the sum they had missed when Caligula assumed the *toga virilis* (see Chapter 2), and he added the accrued interest of 60 sesterces, for a similar total of 300.⁶⁸ Bequests were also paid to the praetorians, urban cohorts (a kind of city police force), the *vigiles* (essentially a public fire service) and the legionaries. There were also various minor bequests, such as to the Vestal Virgins, as well as to Claudius. Caligula did not stop here, however. Livia's will had not been executed by Tiberius, and the new emperor proceeded to honour it. The legacies apparently were substantial: the future emperor Galba, for instance, who had been cheated of his legacy by Tiberius, became a rich man through Caligula honouring Livia's will.⁶⁹

This massive injection of cash into the financial system would have given the Roman economy a tremendous boost. We perhaps have a glimpse of this in an unexpected source, the *Satyricon* of Petronius. One of Petronius' most memorable characters, Trimalchio, took the first step in his ambitious plan to become prodigiously wealthy when he had five ships built and filled them with wine, which he sent to Rome in anticipation of a massive profit, since wine was 'worth its weight in gold' at the time (in the event all five sank). Trimalchio is, of course, a fictitious character, but he operates within a historical setting, and the best dramatic date for his early business career is the late 30s. A boom in the price of wine suggests an excess of cash in the economy, and a run on luxury items, which best suits the first few months of Caligula's reign.⁷⁰

The economy would have received yet another boost by the abolition, in 38, of the sales tax. Until 284, during the reign of Diocletian, direct taxes were levied exclusively in the provinces, inhabitants of Italy paying only indirect taxes. The most important during the Augustan period was the 1 per cent sales tax (*centesima rerum venalium*), intended to finance the military treasury (*Aerarium Militare*). Tiberius had faced much pressure to remove it, and with the revenues accruing from Cappadocia after its incorporation into the empire in 17, he was able to reduce the tax to 0.5 per cent, but bowed to financial necessity and restored it to its original rate of 1 per cent in 31. Under the year 38 Dio reports that Caligula was able to abolish the tax altogether.⁷¹ A copper quadrans issue (Figure 14.2), beginning in AD 39 and minted to the end of his reign, has the reverse legend RCC, and has long been assumed to stand for *remissa ducentesima* ('on the removal of the .5 tax'), but there is no actual evidence for this supposition (see Chapter 15).⁷²



Figure 14.2 Caligula quadrans (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

Heavy spending, combined with reductions in taxes, was bound, sooner or later, to place unbearable strains on the treasury. Dio suggests that Caligula had used up his vast surplus by his second year, and the raising of two new legions in 39 would have involved massive extra expenditure. We unfortunately do not have a clear understanding of the precise relationship between the minting of money and ‘economic policy’ in the ancient world. Precious metal coinage is relatively scarce during the reign of Caligula but, to judge from dated issues, is most plentiful in this first year, suggesting perhaps heavy mintage to pay for the legacies of Tiberius and Livia. For reasons that are not clear there is no dated official coinage for the second year of his reign (excepting the scarce quinarius, or half-aureus) in either precious metal or lower value issues. Their minting resumes in 39/40. Certainly, Caligula found that before his reign was over he was in the position of trying desperately to raise revenues.⁷³ Some of his reputed schemes are distinctly bizarre. Pliny claims that he found a way of producing gold from orpiment (sulphur or arsenic), but in too small quantities to be economically viable. It is said that he opened a brothel in his Palatine residence staffed by the children and wives of noble families, and sent touts into the city to drum up business among young and old alike. Shortage of ready cash was no problem, as he was willing to extend credit, and names of customers were registered as having made a contribution to the imperial treasury. Suetonius and Dio are in agreement that this happened (Dio conceding that it was not unpopular), but it is worth noting that similar claims of maintaining imperial brothels were made about Commodus and Elagabalus.⁷⁴

Caligula was more than happy to assume the humble role of auctioneer in order to raise cash. He auctioned off gladiators from the shows, using agents to push up the bidding. Aponius Saturninus once had the misfortune to nod off during the proceedings and woke up to find that he had bought thirteen gladiators

for nine million sesterces.⁷⁵ In Gaul he sold off the possessions of his sisters, and others suspected of conspiring against him, at inflated prices (inflated by the fear that Caligula was targeting the rich), and found the process so lucrative that he arranged for the contents of the palace in Rome, including his family heirlooms, to be transported to Gaul. The sources present his behaviour as buffoonery, telling of how on the rostrum he played the role of auctioneer with gusto, rebuking his audience for their stinginess, joshing them for being richer than himself, and expressing mock regret that ordinary men could possess such fine princely possessions. He would boost the quality of the items, dwelling on their splendid pedigrees (they were family heirlooms). The descriptions of these antics are intended to make Caligula look ridiculous, but they are not far from standard auctioneering tactics, and in this second set of auctions there is no suggestion that he applied any compulsion. It is also worth noting that the later emperor Trajan was actually praised for selling off goods at auction to help make the books balance.⁷⁶

Some of Caligula's schemes were less unusual, and possibly more effective. At the simplest level he seems to have revived the Augustan custom of accepting New Year's gifts of money from individuals. During his absence in Gaul they were even deposited by his vacant throne on the Capitol. In Rome he reputedly collected the money at the entrance to the palace in the folds of his toga, then went home, according to Suetonius, and rolled in it.⁷⁷ He was also an inveterate legacy hunter, for which he was subjected to considerable criticism. But he was not alone in this practice; by the 30s it is claimed that nearly everyone was leaving something to his predecessor Tiberius, who reciprocated by accepting everything left to him. As the sources portray it, Caligula greatly extended the custom. They speak of his being left bequests on a massive scale, mainly as a result of intimidation. Suetonius suggests that to hurry matters on he would actually send people poisoned cakes, and, if anyone had a change of thought about leaving something to him, the whole will was declared null and void.⁷⁸ In fact, only two specific legacies are known. Suetonius reports that Caligula obtained the entire estate of Domitius Ahenobarbus, husband of his sister Agrippina, although only named co-heir with his nephew Nero. The latter had been supposed to receive a third at the time, but was cheated of his share; the full amount was in fact restored by Claudius.⁷⁹ He was also heir to the estate of his distant relative Sextus Pompeius, a wealthy man with lands in Campania, Sicily and Macedonia, and a house in Rome near the forum.⁸⁰ According to Seneca, Caligula deprived Pompeius of his house and invited him to stay at the palace, where he starved him to death, although afterwards arranging a state funeral. It would, in fact, have been appropriate for Pompeius to bequeath property to the emperor, since he was his relative, and he had been on close terms with Germanicus. He may have been very elderly at this time, and his entertainment at the imperial residence and his state funeral are hard to reconcile with Seneca's account of enforced starvation.⁸¹ Dio also speaks of Caligula inheriting the legacies of those condemned to death (*bona caduca*).⁸² There were Augustan and Tiberian precedents for this, and Caligula's action would not have

been thought unusual.⁸³ Indeed, the general claim seems to be contradicted by what Philo says in the specific case of Flaccus, the condemned governor of Egypt. Flaccus' collection of *objets d'art*, his furnishings, cups, carpets and his household slaves were of very high quality and attracted the emperor's attention. Philo claims that this was the only instance where Caligula confiscated the condemned person's goods, and allowed a small amount to go into the *aerarium* to comply with the law.⁸⁴

Some of Caligula's inheritance-gathering techniques do not, however, have identifiable precedents. According to Dio, a senatorial decree stipulated that whoever had bequeathed money to Tiberius, and then survived him, would be obliged to leave it to Caligula.⁸⁵ This is an important constitutional development, in that estates left to the princeps would be seen as left to him not as an individual but as the holder of the office of princeps; this principle would be formalised as a rule (*constitutio*) under Antoninus Pius.⁸⁶ A somewhat similar development is suggested by the declaration that if any senior centurion since the beginning of Tiberius' reign had not named Tiberius or Caligula as heirs, his will would be set aside on the grounds of ingratitude. One of the principles of inheritance law under the Julio-Claudians was the *officium pietatis*, essentially the obligation of the legator to members of his family. A will that did not observe this obligation could be challenged. It seems that Caligula regarded the emperor as someone who had undertaken obligations for the state as a whole, and could thus expect legacies on the grounds of *pietas*.⁸⁷ The regulations concerning legacies may or may not have had major financial implications, but they were significant for the evolving concept of the principate.

Perhaps Caligula's most innovative and possibly even courageous measure was to institute a number of direct taxes previously unknown in Rome. Suetonius and Dio (under AD 40) report the imposition of what they considered shameful ways of raising revenue. He placed taxes on taverns, artisans, slaves and the hiring of slaves. There was a fixed tax on all edibles sold in the city, a *quadrigesima* (2.5 per cent) on the sum involved in legal actions, an *octava* (12.5 per cent) on the daily wages of *geruli* (porters, or perhaps couriers) and a tax on prostitutes equivalent to the income from a single transaction (possibly also in a day); to prevent evasion of this last measure, a tax was placed on pimps and on prostitutes who married. The tax on litigation seems to have applied to cases not only in Rome and Italy, but also in the provinces (*ubique*), almost certainly involving civil lawsuits. Josephus claims that the revenues from these measures did not prove sufficient, and towards the end of his life Caligula was obliged to double them.⁸⁸ Italians had long been in a sense sheltered from financial reality, and their exemption from direct taxes had given them a distinctly unfair advantage over other parts of the empire. Caligula's policies would have helped to redress the balance somewhat. They were not, however, likely to be popular, and perhaps represent the only measures of Caligula's that caused serious resentment among the ordinary people, to the extent that there were outbreaks of unrest at public games when petitions for annulment of the new taxes were presented (see below). It is of interest that in collecting these taxes Caligula at first continued to make use of the *publicani*, the notorious tax

farmers, who competed for the contracts by auction, but then decided to bypass them and used praetorians for the purpose, which proved very lucrative. His future assassin Cassius Chaerea was one charged with this responsibility, which he discharged ineffectively because of his sympathy with the people who had to pay. Caligula's innovative use of the military as tax collectors seems later to have become a common practice.⁸⁹

The sources depict Caligula as an irresponsible spendthrift, who brought the state to the verge of financial ruin and sought to impose outrageous taxes to salvage a disastrous situation that he himself had created. The reality seems to have been quite different. For all his predecessor's supposed extravagances, Claudius must have found the treasury in a fairly healthy state.⁹⁰ He gradually abolished most of the taxes, and refunded some of the money collected, even though he was able to engage in such expensive ventures as the building of the harbour at Ostia and the military campaign in Britain. Nor could the new taxes have been so outrageous. At least one of them stayed in force for centuries: Severus Alexander apparently used the proceeds of the tax on prostitution for building construction in Rome.⁹¹

It is perhaps most logical to judge Caligula's fitness to rule by considering him in relation to those he ruled over. As he returned to Rome from his northern campaign in early 40, he is said to have issued a proclamation that he would be returning only to those who wanted him back, the equestrians and the ordinary people; he could no longer consider himself either fellow citizen or princeps to the senators. This is a revealing insight; it demonstrates Caligula's open hostility towards the senate and reveals also where he hoped to find his support. Whether or not he had formed a conscious and deliberate scheme to recruit the people and the equestrians as allies in his struggle with the senate is a much more difficult question.⁹²

Caligula began his reign as the darling of the masses – Suetonius speaks of the *immensus civium amor* ('the massive affection of his fellow-citizens'). There is also good evidence that he stayed popular with those same masses right up to the end, and indeed their reaction to the news of his death seems to have caused some embarrassment for those members of the elite classes who wrote the historical accounts. There was none of the jubilation that followed the passing of Tiberius, and Suetonius offers the unconvincing explanation that no one believed that he was really dead, and suspected that the reports had been spread by Caligula himself, just to test people. Josephus is perhaps more honest, when he admits that the audience in the theatre was upset at the news of the assassination. But he dismisses their concern with the observation that many of them were just silly women, children and slaves, who knew no better. He does not have a ready explanation for the anger of those citizens who assembled in the forum and demanded a proper investigation of the murder. It has been argued that the populace saw Caligula as an ally in a sort of class war, and that his humiliation of the nobility would have popular support. Josephus does concede that the people saw the emperor as a curb on the senatorial class in its efforts to regain its old privileges.⁹³

While Caligula's self-indulgent behaviour seems to have caused distress among the sober members of the nobility, it did not meet with universal disapproval, and according to Dio the ordinary people actually enjoyed his licentiousness. No doubt it provided a great sense of release after the austerity of the Tiberian years. A number of his measures seem to have been designed intentionally to court popularity. The winter celebration of Saturnalia, previously a three-day event, was extended by Caligula with a festival called the Juvenalis. He apparently added two days, although Dio says that the final one was later removed, only to be restored by Claudius in AD 45 (perhaps a garbled reference to the general abolition and subsequent revalidation of Caligula's *acta*). Free seats were provided at the games.⁹⁴ Another popular act was the drastic reduction of the size of the Saturnalia money gift traditionally given to the emperor by recipients of the corn dole, and used for the manufacture of statues. The number of people involved is uncertain, but Augustus' *Res Gestae* indicates that there were 250,000 corn dole recipients in 2 BC.⁹⁵

He reintroduced clubs (*collegia*) that had previously been banned.⁹⁶ *Collegia* were often made up of men from the same trade or calling, but their purposes tended to be social rather than professional. In the republic they had become involved in political activities, and many had been suppressed by Caesar. The *Lex Julia* of AD 7 laid down that every club had to receive the sanction of the emperor, and Tiberius would have enforced this rule vigorously. Its relaxation by Caligula would have added to the general atmosphere of release that characterised his reign at the outset.

The story of the Gallic cobbler who supposedly made fun of Caligula but did not suffer the consequences because of his humble status (see [Chapter 9](#)) is indicative of someone who was prepared to be generally tolerant towards the lower classes, and Dio admits that he was not offended by the frankness of ordinary people. Almost inevitably, there are stories of his supposed acts of brutality against the masses but it is difficult to assess their accuracy, and they may belong to a stereotype – that the 'bad' emperors like Caligula and Nero were hated by all levels of society.⁹⁷ One reported incident, however, may well be based on fact. Dio and Josephus report that there was dissatisfaction with the numerous new taxes Caligula had introduced, and that people made their protest in the circus. There had been a tradition from Augustus' time for Romans to make requests to the emperor at places of public entertainment. Tiberius on occasion yielded to public pressure. In 32, however, when there were loud protests about the high price of corn and demands for reduction were made in the theatre, Tiberius prevailed on the senate and the consuls to check such demonstrations. Caligula seems to have been prepared to revive the tradition of petitions, but it is claimed that on the occasion of the protest over the taxes he behaved savagely, rounding up people and executing them, and Dio and Josephus report that he had large numbers arrested and put to death.⁹⁸ The disturbances may well have got out of hand, and have been suppressed with some brutality, but the stories of mass executions can almost certainly be dismissed as standard exaggerations.

Caligula did attempt one measure of considerable symbolic importance. He restored to the people a constitutional right that the senate had acquired from them, the nominal control of elections.⁹⁹ In the republic, magistrates had been elected by the *comitia* (popular assemblies). Julius Caesar as dictator had limited their power, stipulating that half the positions be elected by them and half nominated by himself. Only the consulships were excluded from this arrangement. Augustus restored the traditional system in 27 BC, but in fact exercised such tight control over the process that the privileges of the assemblies were more apparent than real. Tiberius introduced an important innovation, when the elections were transferred to the senate, and the assemblies merely ratified the selection of candidates already made, the latter measure presumably being a sop to tradition.¹⁰⁰ Tiberius' withdrawal of this privilege caused no serious popular protest, and the senate was happy with the change, because it relieved them of the necessity of undignified canvassing and expense. The precise character of Tiberius' reform has been a topic of much scholarly debate, but broadly there would have been two provisos in the scheme, that all candidates would have the general approval of the emperor, and also that he might actively support certain individuals, whose election would thereby be secured. In addition, he would decide how many vacancies there would be each year for the consulship and praetorship.

Suetonius and Dio (under AD 38) report that Caligula put the elections back into the hands of the people, rescinding the arrangements that Tiberius had made. The gesture was, of course, largely symbolic, since his powers of controlling who would be candidates (*commendatio* and *nominatio*) would still be retained. Only one consul, Domitius Afer, is specifically identified as having been elected under the new system, in early September 39, and as Dio comments, 'the people chose Domitius as consul in theory but he [sc. Caligula] chose the consul in fact'. In the end, even this essentially symbolic reform failed. Dio comments that the people had for too long grown unused to performing the 'duties of free men'. Usually only a sufficient number of candidates presented themselves to match the number of vacancies, or, if there were more candidates, they arranged the offices among themselves beforehand. In the end Caligula was obliged to restore the elections to the senate, and things reverted essentially to what they had been under Tiberius. Yavetz has commented that the people would have shown little interest in holding on to what was a purely notional power that had no real significance in the overall scheme of things. This is probably true, but an equally important reason for the reform's failure is the hostility of the senate, since as a body they alone could have manipulated the number of candidates to fit the number of vacancies or have agreed beforehand about the outcome.¹⁰¹

If Caligula felt a bond with the ordinary people that contrasted with the tensions between himself and the more elevated social classes this does not mean that he was motivated by love of his subjects. More likely it was their adulation that he craved. There is a telling anecdote preserved by Suetonius about an incident in the arena. During a gladiatorial show a victorious *essedarius* (a gladiator who fought from a chariot), Porius, freed his slave, who presumably had some role in

the victory, perhaps as his driver. The crowd went wild and gave him a thundering round of applause, apparently more voluble than the one they had earlier given Caligula. In a fit of pique he left the amphitheatre, complaining that Romans, rulers of the world, respected gladiators more than their emperors. He was so upset that he reputedly tripped over his toga.¹⁰²

Occupying a higher niche than the ordinary people in the social hierarchy were the equestrians, the *equites*. The precise nature of Caligula's dealings with this class is difficult to determine because of our uncertainty over precisely how equestrian status was acquired. It is generally agreed that a census rating of 400,000 sesterces, and free birth, were prerequisites for entry into the order. What is not resolved is whether the financial prerequisites alone qualified a man automatically for equestrian rank or whether this rank also had to be bestowed by the emperor; the literary sources are not explicit and the inscriptional evidence seems contradictory, but it is very possible that acquisition of the status normally occurred without imperial intercession.¹⁰³ But there was in addition the honorific distinction of the *equus publicus* ('public horse'), which was granted, and if necessary removed, at the pleasure of the emperor. The equestrians were an important element in the Augustan system, and to ensure that the order retained its integrity Augustus had used his quasi-censorial powers to hold reviews (*recognitiones*), to appoint new holders of the *equus publicus* or to dismiss those who had fallen from grace. The poet Ovid is an example of someone who underwent the emperor's scrutiny and survived the test.¹⁰⁴ Augustus also fixed at four the number of *decuriae* (panels) of judges, who were of equestrian rank.

The sources do speak of Caligula's mistreatment of Roman equestrians. In a confused passage Dio says that Caligula put to death twenty-six of them; Suetonius, however, describes a fracas in the course of which over twenty equestrians (and a number of women) were crushed to death. Doubtless one and the same occasion is involved, and the deaths seem to have been accidental. The most vivid story of cruelty towards a member of the order involves a knight who was thrown to the beasts and had his tongue cut out, a story that is highly dubious, as portraying the kind of stock behaviour invariably associated with the cruel tyrant.¹⁰⁵ Many of the other stories of friction with the equestrians seem to be decidedly trivial. It is claimed that Caligula scattered free tickets for the theatre beforehand to let the urban mob seize the seats reserved for the equestrians. He supposedly interrupted a gambling session to go out and confiscate the property of two equestrians he saw passing by, then returned to his game commenting on his lucky streak. When an equestrian created a disturbance in the theatre he was reputedly sent to Mauretania on a fool's errand, and when one made a noise during Mnester's dance Caligula is said to have flogged him personally. Similar stories are told of Tiberius, who is said to have condemned to the treadmill one of the equestrians charged with handling the funeral of Livia.¹⁰⁶

In reality Caligula seems to have gone out of his way to show respect for the order. At the outset of his reign the *equites* were allowed into the chamber when he made his first address to the senate; they were assigned to carry the remains of

Agrippina and Nero to the Mausoleum of Augustus; and were regularly invited to come and listen to Caligula when he gave his speeches in senatorial trials.¹⁰⁷ Dio notes that the size of the equestrian order had declined during the final years of Tiberius' reign and that Caligula did his best to make up the numbers, enrolling wealthy men from the whole of the empire.¹⁰⁸ He held a *recognitio*, revising the lists carefully but fairly, removing those who had been guilty of behaviour that was deemed wicked or scandalous (*probra* and *ignimonia*), but making allowance for trivial misdemeanours.¹⁰⁹ It may have been this scrupulous examination that prompted Josephus to make the exaggerated claim that he launched a full-scale attack on the equestrians, depriving them of their honours; it is certainly the best context for criticisms that Caligula is said to have made of the order, as devotees of the stage and the arena.¹¹⁰ A *senatus consultum* of AD 19 regulated the conduct of the upper classes and prohibited them from taking part in the *spectacula*. It does seem that this ruling was broadly disregarded under Caligula. Both Dio and Suetonius suggest that he compelled equestrians to perform as gladiators, and Dio cites the case of one who was forced to fight in single combat on the grounds of insulting the emperor's mother, Agrippina. But later action by Claudius suggests that some at least of these appearances were voluntary. Claudius applied the law in its full force, obliging equestrians who had appeared on the stage under Caligula to appear once more, not because he enjoyed watching them, but to make them feel embarrassed about their behaviour. This would make little sense if the original participation had been compulsory. Caligula's failure in this area may have been that he was too lax in implementing the senatorial decrees.¹¹¹

Enrolment of equestrians into the panels of judges, or *decuriae*, seems to have been neglected by Tiberius after his departure for Capri. The number of panels had been established by Augustus at four, and Caligula added a fifth, encountering no shortage of candidates to fill them. He also gave encouragement to equestrians who aspired to become senators. According to Dio, he permitted some to wear the *latus clavus*, the broad-striped toga, symbolic of the senatorial order, before they had reached the office (quaestorship) that granted normal access to the senate, in other words, he elevated to the senatorial order those equestrians who intended to pursue a senatorial career. Suetonius observes that Augustus had allowed the sons of senators to assume the *latus clavus* immediately after the *toga virilis*, but says nothing of similar privileges for the *equites*, and Dio goes on to comment that *it seems* that before Caligula only the sons of senators had been permitted to wear the senatorial toga.¹¹² Caligula's measure appears to be progressive and Dio comments that it proved to be popular. Its precise significance, however, is disputed. Scholars have noted the uncertainty of Dio about Augustus' practice ('it seems'), and claim that Suetonius' neglect to mention the equestrians in the discussion of that emperor's policy does not mean that Augustus necessarily excluded them from wearing the *latus clavus* as a preliminary to a senatorial career. Certainly it seems that Vespasian, an equestrian, was granted the *latus clavus* from Tiberius before his quaestorship.¹¹³ It may be that under Tiberius the careers of ambitious equestrians had stagnated and that the *latus clavus* had been bestowed

on very few. But whether Caligula's measure was an innovation, or simply the full implementation of a practice that had fallen into general abeyance, it shows, at the very least, a degree of sympathy for the equestrians as an order. After his time it seems that it became regular for equestrians to receive the *latus clavus* from the emperor before actually seeking senatorial office.

The reign of Caligula is often seen as a battle between the emperor and the senate. This was certainly not the case at the outset. When he first came to power Caligula went out of his way to be accommodating. In his initial speech before the senate he promised full partnership and cooperation, in the Augustan manner. He showed senators consideration even in trivial matters, allowing them to sit on cushions instead of bare boards at shows, and to wear hats to protect their heads from the sun. Since they faced a practical physical problem in getting to the senate house quickly for important sessions (their houses were scattered all through Rome), he seems to have given them in advance a written outline of the items he would like to see discussed at each session. He attended their debates on several occasions.¹¹⁴ He showed a responsible interest in their proceedings, and engaged himself in such issues as the order of precedence. Augustus had essentially used a system that operated under the republic, by which senators of consular rank were called upon at random, and others below that by seniority. Under Tiberius the consular Marcus Junius Silanus, Caligula's father-in-law, was invariably called upon first, not because of seniority but because of his personal eminence. Caligula arranged that henceforth the former consuls, like other members, should be called on in order of seniority.¹¹⁵ An important consequence of this was, of course, that he personally would be left to near the end, thus discouraging senators who might be inclined simply to take their lead from him. In accordance with this procedure, his uncle Claudius would also naturally and properly appear near the end of the list, explaining Suetonius' charge that Caligula made a point of always calling on Claudius last.¹¹⁶ At the outset Caligula seems to have limited the appeal to the emperor against the verdicts of magistrates. This process seems to have begun with Augustus, since in a confused passage Dio refers to the right to entertain appeals among the powers granted to him in 30 BC, and Suetonius notes that he delegated his authority to hear appeals to the *praetor urbanus* or, for the provinces, to ex-consuls. While Caligula seems at first to have given up the right of appeal, at some point he must have regained it, since we learn that the senate did not have the final authority in criminal cases, and that many appeals were in fact made to the emperor.¹¹⁷

The basically congenial relationship between emperor and senate did not last beyond the first few months of the reign. Already by the end of 37, Caligula's father-in-law Silanus, one of the most respected members, had been forced to commit suicide, and his removal could be regarded in a sense as the first provocative measure taken by Caligula against a senator, or at least the first one recorded. A small number of senators, like Julius Graecinus, apparently refused to be party to the proceedings against Silanus. But they were in a distinct minority. Caligula seems to have encountered little opposition, and even to have enjoyed broad

collaboration. Philo suggests that he was congratulated for what he did: 'almost the whole inhabited earth, though they deplored what was going on, flattered Gaius all the same, glorifying him unduly and thus increasing his vanity'.¹¹⁸ In late 37 his problems seem to have been essentially internal, involving possible intrigue within the court circle. In 39 he faced a quite different situation, with opposition not only from within his own family but also, apparently, from disaffected army commanders and unhappy senators. His policy for handling the threat of conspiracy was to isolate his enemies, to make every senator fear for himself and to ensure that each would see it as in his self-interest to make his loyalty to the emperor patent. In the short term it was effective. Dio speaks of the great number of trials that occurred when Caligula was away in the north, trials before the senate, where he evidently must have been able to count on considerable support. In the last few months of his reign there were still senators prepared to betray those few of their numbers principled enough to stand up to autocracy. The fate of Proculus, murdered by fellow members, shows how little confidence could be placed in his colleagues, who added insult to injury by voting special festivals in honour of Caligula afterwards. Caligula's response to those who plotted against him was ruthless. The sources claim, however, that it was also indiscriminate, Dio making the observation that it was 'nothing but slaughter'.¹¹⁹ But it is difficult to accept that the executions occurred on a wide scale. The list of the named victims is a relatively short one, and in almost every case there seems to be good reason to suspect guilt (albeit, arguably, in a worthy cause).

The modern historian will legitimately look for patterns in Caligula's treatment of individual senators. When he destroyed the papers that related to the trials of his relatives he claimed that his purpose was to show that he bore no grudge against those involved in the cases. These would, of course, have been, by and large, adherents of Sejanus, and in his denunciation of the senators in 39, his general term of abuse was 'clients of Sejanus'. It would seem, then, a reasonable assumption that from 39 on Caligula was determined to be rid of those whose names were linked to that of the hated Prefect.¹²⁰ Yet the evidence does not seem to bear this out. Gaetulicus, the treacherous commander in Germany, was of course an old Sejanian, and Calvisius Sabinus, governor of Pannonia, was one of the group of five high-ranking senators accused of *maiestas* in 32 after the fall of Sejanus and generally assumed to have been among his adherents (see [Chapter 2](#)).¹²¹ Their executions in 39 might well seem at first sight to be some kind of final reckoning. Yet two men from that group of five survived, and prospered, under Caligula. Vinicianus became a close friend of Lepidus (and possibly of the emperor) and was co-opted into the Arvals in 38, the only man from a non-traditional Arval family to be so honoured during Caligula's reign. A second member of the group was Gaius Appius Silanus, consul of 28. He held important positions under Caligula, was magister of the Arvals in 39, and became governor of Hispania Citerior, probably in about 40. Moreover, Caligula's partner in the consulship for 39 was Lucius Apronius Caesianus. He was the brother-in-law of Gaetulicus the conspirator, yet not only was he granted the consulship but

he was allowed to complete his whole term when Caligula stepped down after thirty days. Publius Pomponius Secundus, who had been imprisoned because of his association with Sejanus, was freed on Caligula's accession. Cassius Longinus, possibly the brother of the accuser of Drusus, Caligula's brother, was made proconsul of Asia in 40/1.

In fact, Caligula seems to have been remarkably free of malice towards the relatives and associates of those who had opposed either him or his family. Lucius Arruntius Camillus, for instance, was appointed governor of Dalmatia in about 40. Yet he is the adopted son of the Arruntius accused of *maiestas* under Tiberius and who committed suicide rather than serve under Caligula. Lucius Calpurnius Piso, the son of the man suspected of murdering Germanicus, was appointed *praefectus urbi* shortly before Tiberius' death and remained in that post under Caligula, possibly until his appointment as proconsul of Africa. Publius Dolabella, either the consul of AD 10, and thus co-accuser of Agrippina's friend Quintilius Varus, or the son of the accuser, was one of the group co-opted into the Salii (priests of Mars) in AD 37.¹²² Moreover, many eminent senators seem to have been more than happy to collaborate with the emperor. It is noticeable that a large number of individuals seem to have prospered under Caligula but anxiously sought later to create the impression that they would have suffered from his arbitrary cruelty had it not been for lucky circumstances, or their own ingenuity. Lucius Vitellius, for instance, is supposed to have been summoned from Parthia to be punished. But in a stroke of genius he performed *proskynesis* and worshipped Caligula as a god. Reputedly, when asked if he could see the moon in the emperor's presence, Vitellius had the swiftness of mind to reply promptly that 'only the gods were permitted to see one-another'. His timely flattery is said to have won him a reprieve. In fact, Vitellius probably had little to fear when he left his province, and his recall was probably routine. Certainly he felt sufficiently relaxed to give thought to collecting exotic species of figs to take back from Syria to his Alban estate. He also went on to prosper, holding the consulship under Claudius, and earning the sneers of Tacitus and Dio as an imperial lackey.¹²³ If he was indeed in disfavour in 37, his replacement in Syria was hardly from the opposing camp. Petronius was the son-in-law of a Vitellia, and his own daughter was married to Vitellius' son Aulus, the future emperor.

Seneca was supposedly marked for execution but saved because the emperor was persuaded that he was in an advanced state of consumption and near death in any case. He went on to flatter Claudius, the next emperor, while alive, and then to ridicule him, after his death. Domitius Afer was charged, apparently with *maiestas*, and prosecuted by Caligula personally. He supposedly had the brainwave of expressing astonishment at the emperor's eloquence, and thereby gained not only a reprieve but even, remarkably enough, a consulship. Vinicianus, co-opted into the Arvals in 38 and on Caligula's death one of the most prominent senators in Rome, claimed that he lived under threat of constant reprisal because of his friendship with Lepidus. Others, we are to believe, survived purely by lucky chance. Memmius Regulus, Cassius Longinus, Publius Petronius were all slated for

execution, and won eleventh-hour reprieves with Caligula's death. Some Romans, apparently, decided that instead of trying to rewrite history, they would simply be reticent. Ummidius Quadratus, it will be recalled, had loyally administered the oath to Caligula in Lusitania, in 37, and was probably awarded a consulship in 40. But on an inscription from Casinum in Italy, covering his career, he describes himself as a legate of Tiberius in Lusitania, then as legate of Claudius in Illyricum, dropping any reference to his service under Caligula.¹²⁴

The hostility between Caligula and the senate was no doubt highly exaggerated in those senatorial sources that dealt with the topic after Caligula's death. The senators had to face the embarrassing fact that not only did the majority of them survive unscathed, but many collaborated against the principled few who had taken a stand, and as a body they were prepared, time after time, not only to condone but even to applaud some of Caligula's outrageous actions. They saw fit later to pretend that they had lived under autocratic repression. Yet they may in fact have enjoyed considerable political independence right to the end. For the election of Domitius Afer in late 39 the system of election through the popular assemblies was still in operation. It failed, as Dio points out, because the senate refused to cooperate and took measures to sabotage it. Dio makes it clear that the senate at this time was still able to act with much independence, and felt secure enough from personal reprisals to oppose the emperor in a purely political arena.

Certainly, by 39 Caligula's general hostility towards the senate as an institution was undisguised. It is from this year on that he begins to hold continuous consulships, and his antipathy towards the senatorial order manifests itself in his treatment of certain individual senators, particularly those from ancient families who presumably might have been seen to pose a threat, if not to his life, then at any rate to his status. But his favoured punishment seems not to have been execution, but humiliation, one form being to deprive members of distinguished backgrounds of *cognomina* that recalled ancestral military glory.¹²⁵ One identified victim was Decimus Junius Silanus Torquatus, son of Marcus Silanus and Aemilia Lepida, the great-granddaughter of Augustus.¹²⁶ He seems to have taken an excessive pride in his family connections, and would boast of his descent from Augustus. He was deprived of his distinguished *cognomen* 'Torquatus', one that had passed into his family in 361 BC when an ancestor slew a Gaul in single combat and took the torque from his neck. Since he is recorded as a member of the *Salii* in AD 40, still with the *cognomen* (albeit fragmentary) Torquatus, his disgrace must post-date the inscription.¹²⁷ Junius' fortunes did revive under Claudius, and he attained the consulship in 53, but was forced under Nero to commit suicide in 64.

A similar punishment was meted out to Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, the son of Marcus Crassus Frugi and Scribonia, the great-granddaughter of Pompey the Great (to be distinguished from the Scribonia at one time married to Octavian). His mother had named the boy after her distinguished ancestor. He clearly for a time enjoyed Caligula's favour, and was another listed among members of the *Salii* in AD 40. But he seems to have been an arrogant young man, and the imperial favours may have gone to his head. The grandiloquent name given to Pompeius

by his parents might have seemed provocative at the best of times; he would be the first to bear it for several generations, and unusually so, since it came through the mother's line. At some point Caligula became so irritated by him that he stripped him of the title of Magnus. This must have occurred after the Salii inscription, where he is still 'Magnus'. Pompeius may well have had political ambitions that exceeded his talents. But he was important enough for Claudius not only to restore his title, but also to give him his daughter Antonia in marriage. He was put to death in 46/7 without trial, presumably for political reasons.¹²⁸ Other senators who took a particular pride in their lineage were marked for similar degradation. An otherwise unknown (Quinctius) Cincinnatus seems to have endured the similar humiliation of being deprived of his famous *cognomen* under Caligula. The Quinctii had by legend obtained their *cognomen* from their famous ancestor, called from the plough to deliver Rome from peril. There do not seem to have been Quinctii of the distinction of Torquatus and Pompeius in Caligula's day, but the family did come into some prominence under Augustus and it has been speculated that they might have resumed their famous *cognomen* to reflect their renewed status.¹²⁹ Since the name means 'curly-haired' one might wonder if some self-deprecating witticism lies behind this particular reference.¹³⁰

Caligula's antipathy towards the senatorial class has been detected in a measure recorded by Suetonius, that he placed a prohibition on any living person having his statue erected anywhere without obtaining the emperor's permission.¹³¹ Dio says that by the time of Claudius' reign there was no restriction on the erection of statues and that on his accession Claudius relocated existing ones, and introduced a broad prohibition, banning private statues from public places without permission of the senate, unless the individual had built a civic amenity at his own expense.¹³² This suggests that Caligula had imposed no check whatsoever at the beginning of his reign, and did so only when it was too late to have any real effect (and of course the rule, like all of his *acta*, would have been abolished after his assassination). Dio's testimony also suggests that Caligula's measure, given that it was re-enacted by Claudius, was in response to a genuine problem that the proliferation of private statues was causing. Suetonius' observation that Caligula's ban was in effect everywhere (*usquam*) could be taken to mean that it was applied even in private houses, which seems unlikely. Suetonius possibly intended to convey the notion that every part of the city was affected.¹³³

It has been suggested already that apart from the small number of senators engaged actively in attempts to remove Caligula, the great majority had no reason to fear for their lives from the arbitrary exercise of his power, despite the impression that they tried desperately to create later. But senators clearly had a right to more from their emperor than a reasonable expectation that if they did not plot against him they would not be eliminated. They would properly have resented deeply his refusal to show them the basic deference to which they by tradition had been entitled, a deference that had been shown by Augustus and even by Tiberius. The position of Roman senators was a curious one. Outside Italy, either in the public provinces, or in the more direct service of the princeps,

they could perform useful service in positions of great authority and prestige, commanding armies or governing often quite substantial territories. Back in Rome they found themselves bereft of any real power and obliged to defer to a ruler whose ability and experience was much inferior to theirs yet whose power was almost unlimited. They had invested this young man with the powers of a monarch, yet they expected him as a Roman to behave only as a first citizen, with the old Augustan virtue of *civilitas*. Caligula was almost incapable of respect to anyone, and Seneca comments on his inability to deal with people without insulting them. Since he had so little regard for the senate, it is natural that he would be sensitive to any perceived slight from them. ‘Who dares teach me?’ is one of the most revealing phrases attributed to him by Philo. Thus senators who tried to ingratiate themselves with him by calling him a ‘young Augustus’ found that it had the very opposite effect – he took it as a criticism that he was emperor despite being so young. To some extent this might explain his success with ordinary people, and the equestrians. He was able, as Dio comments, to accept the frank comments of the common citizen, who would be lacking the pretensions that might be a challenge, and who would simply not expect to be treated with tact and deference.¹³⁴

On close examination the senate does not, as a body, distinguish itself under Caligula, its sense of independence apparently nullified by the insecurity engendered in the course of the Tiberian treason trials. They perhaps had little choice at the outset in confirming him as princeps, given the swift pre-emptive arrangements that Macro made with the legionary commanders and the praetorian guard. Yet they must bear responsibility for the massive grant of powers they made to the young, inexperienced and almost totally unknown claimant, and for their own reluctance to try to curb or restrain him. Nor does the fact that the response to each humiliation was routinely even more fulsome honours command respect. Nor their willingness to expend vast sums to entertain the emperor, driving themselves to bankruptcy in their desire to please. They in fact behaved with the same docility that had often excited the contempt of Tiberius, who called them (in Greek) ‘men ready to be slaves’.¹³⁵ The autocracy that caused such resentment was an autocracy that they themselves had helped to create, and continued to foster. Despite the senate’s evident failings, however, it must be acknowledged that Augustus and Tiberius had managed to work with the body tolerably well, as would Claudius later, and as an institution the senate could make an enormous positive contribution to the orderly government of Rome. Their shortcomings in no way excuse Caligula for his much greater failings.

Caligula had, at the outset, conducted himself as an *exoptatissimus princeps*, ‘good, generous, fair and community spirited’, as Philo calls him.¹³⁶ By the end he was an arrogant despot. It is significant that the sources cannot agree on when the dramatic deterioration took place. Philo places the change immediately after his illness. Josephus states precisely that he ruled the state nobly for two years, presumably until driven mad by Caesonia’s aphrodisiacs. Josephus is inconsistent, however, since at one point he says that Caligula began administering the empire in

a high-minded fashion and exercised moderation until he was corrupted by power; yet he also describes him as bloodthirsty and perverse by nature, and a sinister character even before becoming emperor. Dio emphasises the contradictions in his personality, that he expressed liberalism, and practised tyranny, preached moderation and indulged in excess, forgave criminals but executed the innocent, and he places the beginning of the indiscriminate political murders early in 38. Plutarch says ambiguously that he ruled *epiphanos* ('splendidly') for a short time, the 'short time' presumably referring to the initial period of the reign, rather than to the reign as a brief whole. Suetonius divides his *Life of Caligula* into two sections, the first of which he devotes to the 'princeps', who 'fulfilled the hopes of the Roman world if not of mankind', the second, and longer, one to the *monstrum*. He gives no precise chronological information, but tellingly a number of the acts that he attributes to the 'princeps' in fact occur fairly late in the reign. The bridge at Baiae probably belongs to the summer of 39, the oratorical contest at Lyons to the winter of 39/40, while the award of money to Quintilia, the torture victim, belongs at the earliest to the autumn of 40, less than a year before the emperor's death.¹³⁷

In fact we see that Caligula was able, when the occasion and his inclination demanded, to behave sensibly in every phase of his reign. The fire in the Aemiliana district, when his assistance was commended by Dio, is fixed by the *Fasti* in October 38. The excellent appointments that he made in 39, of men like Galba and Petronius, men who were responsible for the relative success of his reign in the provinces, show that he was still then capable of making sound judgement. Right to the very end of his reign he seems to have been willing to accept good advice. He changed his mind about his plan for returning the elections to the popular *comitia* when faced with the implacable opposition of the senate, and reversed his position on the temple in Jerusalem, reputedly at the urging of Agrippa. At all periods he seems to have sought to govern with a remarkable degree of openness. The most striking examples, of course, are his publication of the financial accounts and the lifting of censorship in 37. Dio also comments that he went to considerable trouble to have Tiberius' will annulled, even though he could simply have suppressed it. But his openness was not confined to the early cooperative period of the reign. When he reintroduced the *lex maiestatis* in 39 he ordered that its terms should be inscribed on a bronze tablet. He published the names of those condemned by *in camera* trials. Divorces were recorded in the *Acta Diurna*. He even reputedly published the names of clients at his brothel on the Palatine.¹³⁸

Caligula was clearly capable of acting right to the end in a rational manner. Why then does he seem so often to have behaved otherwise? What emerges clearly from the sources is that while he was not clinically mad, that is, suffering from a diagnosable psychosis, he was so obsessed with a sense of his own importance as to be practically devoid of any sense of moral responsibility, a man for whom the tenure of the principate was little more than an opportunity to exercise power.¹³⁹ This attitude might well have its origins in the experience of his early youth, when

any moral indignation over the deaths of his mother and brothers needed to be suppressed if he was to survive. It might have resulted from the heady experience of being catapulted from sequestered obscurity to the central position of authority over a world empire. This is speculative. But what is clear is that once in power he manifested a totally self-centred view of the world. This had unfortunate results. While we are not able to assess the validity of the constant charges of sadistic cruelty in the sources, which can probably be charged to the traditional portrayal of a tyrant, we cannot ignore what Caligula indirectly reveals about himself. As has been pointed out earlier, many of the hostile anecdotes about him may arise from his penchant for grim and ironical humour. But the very fact that so many of his witticisms have a cruel and sadistic, even macabre, aspect tells us very much about his view of the world. He would deplore the state of the times because there had been no great disasters to match the massacre of the legions in Germany under Augustus, or the disaster at Fidenae, when the wooden amphitheatre collapsed and burned in AD 27 during the reign of Tiberius, leading to a great loss of life.¹⁴⁰ He advocated killing a person slowly so that he would know that he was dying. He laughed out loud in the presence of the consuls, and when asked why, said that with a single nod he could have had their throats cut on the spot. He spoke of eliminating whole legions, or the whole of the senate, or the legal profession, wished that the Roman populace had a single neck so that he could break it with one blow, threatened to torture his wife Caesonia, commented when kissing the neck of a mistress or wife that he could cut it off at a simple order. Almost certainly, none of these or similar comments would have been seriously intended (even though the sources persist in so taking them), but Caligula's disturbing obsession with the dark humour of destructive power suggests that he was a man who would see the principate as an expression of his right to exercise unchecked powers. The executions of Caligula's reign do not seem to have been indiscriminate. But principled Romans would have recognised something sinister in a man who was so lacking in moral scruples that sending fellow humans to their deaths was looked upon not as a cruel yet inevitable necessity of governing, but as a matter of almost total indifference. If Caligula was mad, he was not the potty eccentric typified by a Ludwig of Bavaria, but a much more frightening Stalinesque figure, capable of rational decisions, capable of statesmanlike acts (when it suited him), but morally neutral, impervious to any ethical imperatives in the pursuit of his own personal ends, and ultimately indifferent to the consequences of his actions on others.¹⁴¹

There is no great mystery why the relationship between Caligula and the senate should have turned sour. As long as an adoring Rome paid homage to him there was no reason why the dark and perverse side of his personality should show itself. Dio claims that in 37 the senators could not believe that anyone so young would be capable of deceit. But it is probably unlikely that Caligula tried deliberately to deceive. The 'honeymoon period', at the outset of a new regime, is not a phenomenon that is restricted to the ancient world. The austerity of Tiberius' reign, the magic of Germanicus' name, and a healthy surplus in the treasury would assure him of an initial period of euphoria, a euphoria in which he could

participate – *optimus est post malum principem dies primus* ('the best day after a bad princeps is the first'), as Tacitus observed.¹⁴² But when the problems arose, as they inevitably do in any administrative process, he saw any criticisms or suggestions as a challenge to his prestige and authority, to be met by confrontation, not by compromise. Ultimately he could not seriously alienate the senatorial class. At the outset the Roman army had effectively placed Caligula in power, yet the authority of the senate was needed to sanction his investiture. Similarly, the praetorians did not need the physical assistance of the senate to remove Caligula, but it was the backing of the senate, or at least of its prominent members, that gave them the moral authority to carry out the deed. There were powerful figures working in the background for Caligula's removal during his final months. But it was not the disloyalty or ambitions of others that lay at the heart of his downfall. He was, as Mommsen put it over a century ago, an individual of 'unadulterated mediocrity' (*glatte Mittelmäßigkeit*).¹⁴³ It was his own arrogance and irresponsibility, his contempt for those deserving respect, his uncaring, even cruel, indifference towards those who merited his support, his own wilful abuse of power, that proved his undoing.

Notes

- 1 Suet. *Cal.* 8.4, 50.2; Suetonius is our only source for his epilepsy, and there is a danger that he, or his source, misdiagnosed symptoms that could apply to a range of childhood ailments (see Hurley 1993: 180); if he did indeed suffer from epilepsy, it was of the *petit mal* rather than the *grand mal* variety, since the latter persists through adulthood. Woods 2008 argues that he did in fact remain epileptic in later life and that epileptic episodes, which were covered up, can be identified. Julius Caesar suffered from seizures (Plut. *Caes.* 17.2, 60.6; Suet. *Jul.* 45.14) but the genetic link between Caesar and Caligula is too remote to posit a hereditary cause. Benediktson 1991–2: 159–60 draws attention to Suetonius' observation that Caligula could not swim (Suet. *Cal.* 54.2), noting that it was dangerous for epileptics to swim.
- 2 Philo *Leg.* 42, 183; Sen. *Ira* 3.19.3; Suet. *Aug.* 78.1; *Cal.* 50.2, 53.2, 54.1.
- 3 Suet. *Aug.* 90; *Tib.* 69; *Cal.* 51.3.
- 4 See Kloft 2000; Holl, Kloft and Fesser 2001; Schlünzen 2009.
- 5 Jos. *AJ* 19.193; Juv. *Sat.* 6.614–7; Suet. *Cal.* 50.2; Jerome, *Chronicon*, on 94 BC. He may, of course, through some psychological quirk have needed an aphrodisiac only in the case of his wife. But the whole notion of the aphrodisiac may have originated from a quip of Caligula's (Suet. *Cal.* 33) that he felt like torturing Caesonia to discover why he loved her so passionately (see Benediktson 1989).
- 6 Lucretius: Jerome, *Chronicon*, on 94 BC: *per intervalla insaniae* (which might mean 'in his phases of madness'); Antony: Plut. *AJ* 37.4, 60.1; Dio 49.34.1; Plautius: Tac. *Ann.* 4.23.3.
- 7 Jos. *BJ* 5.396; Tac. *Ann.* 6.46.2, 13.3.4; Suet. *Cal.* 50.2.
- 8 Sen. *Clem.* 1.25.1; *Ben.* 2.16.1; *Ira* 1.20.9; *Cons.* 18.4; *Tran.* 14.5; *Cons. Pol.* 17.5.
- 9 Sen. *Ira* 1.20.8; Suet. *Cal.* 22.4; Dio 59.28.8.
- 10 Philo *Leg.* 349–68.
- 11 Schizophrenic: Esser 1958: 139; schizoid: Lucas 1967.
- 12 See Alston 2014: 130. The approach of more recent scholars has been appropriately cautious, see in particular Schrömbges 1988, who assesses the motivation of each individual ancient source; Winterling 2007: 125–8; Ronning 2011; Sidwell 2010

- surveys the modern scholarship. Garzetti 1974: 580–86 provides a useful summary of the scholarship to the 1970s.
- 13 See in particular Dabrowski 1972. Lefebure 2010 notes that the accounts of Caligula and Nero share many stock features and suggests that there they have contaminated one another.
 - 14 We can in fact observe this ongoing process of distortion: Camus in his *Caligula* takes Caligula's quips and deliberately transforms them into serious pronouncements; see Gillis 1974: 396–7.
 - 15 On his humour, see Auguet 1984: 189–96.
 - 16 Ulysses: Suet. *Cal.* 23.2; bald men: Suet. *Cal.* 27.1; Dio 59.22.3; Frugi: Suet. *Cal.* 37.1; wealthy pauper: Dio 59.18.5. The point of Caligula's joke about the bald men is, as often, opaque. It has force only if all the men are bald, and it suggests that prisoners' heads were shaved: Braun 1948; *Guastella* 1992: 1993; Wardle 1994: 246–7; Woods 2005: 213.
 - 17 Embassy: Philo *Leg.* 349–68; on the distinction in sacrifices, see Price 1984: 209–10.
 - 18 Suet. *Cal.* 55.2–3; Dio 59.14.7, 28.6; see Willrich 1903: 461–2; Guarino 2007; Adams 2007: 162–3; Alston 2014: 139. Gladstone: Blake 1966: 715 claimed that Gladstone was the first to use the jocular analogy. Woods 2014a suggests that the joke arose from the names of Incitatus ('rapid') and one of the suffect consuls for 38, Asinius Celer ('swift ass').
 - 19 Suet. *Cal.* 34.2. Suetonius may here just be reporting in exaggerated terms a reversion to a practice that had been common under Augustus; Bauman 1974: 137 sees all contrary lawyers' opinions constituting *maiestas*; Wardle 1994: 267–8.
 - 20 Grant 1949, for instance, argues that the Spanish mints were closed because they frequently depicted members of his family.
 - 21 Suet. *Cal.* 23.1. Woods 2009 suggests that Caligula was speaking of his descent from Julia Augusta (Livia) and that the anecdote became distorted in its transmission.
 - 22 Cited by Philo *Leg.* 291.
 - 23 Rome: *ILS* 180; Aphrodisias: *AE* 1980.874; Mytilene: *IGR* 4.79–80; see Wardle 1994: 217.
 - 24 Agrippa as: *RIC*² 1.28; Agrippina sestertius: *RIC*² 1.55; Caesaraugusta: Agrippa: *RPC* 381, 386; Agrippina *RPC* 380.
 - 25 Suet. *Cal.* 23.1; absolutism: Momigliano 1932a: 212; Garzetti 1974: 85; Donciu 1989: 638; conciliation: Ceaușescu 1973.
 - 26 Dio 59.21.6; *AEA* 12c.70–4.
 - 27 Suet. *Claud.* 11.3; *AEA* 12c (Smallwood 3); on Antony's birthday, see Suerbaum 1980: 332–4.
 - 28 Suet. *Cal.* 23.3.
 - 29 Suet. *Cal.* 23.2; *CIL* 2.1667, 9.3661; *IGR* 4.983. Pliny *NH* 10.45 and Varro *RR* 3.6.1 show that Aufidius Lurco was a completely different person; see Wiseman 1965: 333–4.
 - 30 Suet. *Cal.* 22.4; for a summary, see Wardle 1994: 215; most recently Gury 2000.
 - 31 Lugand 1930: 11–12.
 - 32 Gagé 1968: 54; Lambrechts 1953; Köberlein 1962; for a summary see Gury 2000: 73–7.
 - 33 This notion has a surprising number of adherents: Kornemann 1927: 15, 44; 1930: 51–3; Pippidi 1939: 105; L'Orange 1941: 115; Lambrechts 1953: 226, n. 2; Colin 1954: 408; Gury 2000: 577–8; Adams 2007: 206–9.
 - 34 Caesar: Nic. Dam. *Caes.* 20 [*FGrHist* 90, F130.20]; Suet. *Jul.* 79.3; Antony: Dio 50.4.1; Caligula: Philo *Leg.* 250; Suet. *Cal.* 8.5, 49.2. Josephus mentions only his plan to make a visit to the city; Nero: Dio 63.27.2. Philo *Leg.* 338 attributes Caligula's enthusiasm for Alexandria to his lofty status there, not to the city as a repository of Egyptian culture; *Guastella* 1992: 261.

- 35 Gury 2000 emphasises the identification of Diana, Isis, Luna (moon) and argues that Caligula had a special affinity for the last.
- 36 Jos. *AJ* 19.30, 104; see also Suet. *Cal.* 52; Sudas. sv *Kaligola*.
- 37 Lucan *Bell. Civ.* 8.831; Jos. *AJ* 18.65–80; Dio 53.2.4; Tiberius: Tac. *Ann.* 2.85; Suet. *Tib.* 36.
- 38 See Malaise 1972a: 226–7, updating Mommsen, *CIL* 1² P.333, who argued for a correlation in 36–39, followed by Wissowa 1912: 353; Latte 1960; Köberlein 1962: 12.
- 39 Cumont 1936; Rizzo 1936: 213; Köberlein 1962: 24–5; Boethius and Ward-Perkins 1970: 206; for a reconstruction, see Wiseman 2013b: 107.
- 40 Beyen 1948: 11; Schefold 1957; Carettoni 1971: 323–6; Malaise 1972b: 215–9; Rouillet 1972: 43–9; Coarelli 2007: 150 believes that the Antony attribution is feasible.
- 41 Jos. *AJ* 19.104; Suet. *Cal.* 57.4.
- 42 See Zietsman 2009.
- 43 Pliny *NH* 33.41; Rouillet 1972: 69, 81, 83, 94.
- 44 Tac. *Ann.* 2.59.1.
- 45 Rouillet 1972: 324. Tiberius Claudius Callistus, possibly a freedman of Claudius, is recorded as *aedituus templi Serapei* (*AE* 1977.28).
- 46 Jeanmaire 1924: 258–9; 1930: 152–3.
- 47 Suet. *Cal.* 22.1.
- 48 See, in particular, Adams 2007: 46–71. That the Romans might not have been generally impressed by Hellenistic client monarchs is argued by Rawson 1975.
- 49 Suet. *Cal.* 22.1; Hom. *Il.* 2.204. This quotation from Homer seems to be the source of Aurelius Victor's claim that Caligula demanded that he be addressed as *dominus* (*Epit.* 3.8, cf. *Caes.* 39.4); Caligula was quoting Greek – he never applied the hated Latin word *rex* to himself (Wilkinson 2012: 26).
- 50 Reports in the sources that at some point he deprived some client kings, such as Antiochus, Lysanias and Mithridates of the Bosphorus, of their kingdoms, possibly arose over confusion caused by the revocation of Caligula's *acta* at the beginning of Claudius' reign, after which the kings would have to be reconfirmed in their position by the new emperor (Jos. *AJ* 19.275, *BJ* 2.215; Dio 59.8.2, 60.8.1); see Barrett 1990; *contra*, Wardle 1992a.
- 51 Sohaemus: Jos. *AJ* 20.158; Dio 59.12.2; see Barrett 1977b: 154. Jones 1971: 456 n. 45 identifies his kingdom as Arca, at the northern end of the Lebanon range; Mithridates: Barrett 1977a; the status of the Bosphorus under Caligula is highly contentious; see most recently Dmitriev 2003, who argues that Polemo was initially granted the Bosphorus and it was assigned to Mithridates in AD 39.
- 52 Dio 59.8.2; *RPC* 3852–63; coins inscribed Lykaonon also indicate that he received a certain amount of territory north of the Taurus in southern Lycaonia, which may have belonged originally to Archelaus I of Cappadocia (Tac. *Ann.* 6.41; Magie 1950: 1338, n. 24, 1368, n. 49); Dio 60.8.1 claims that Caligula took Commagene away from Antiochus and that Claudius restored it; Wardle 1992a: 440–43 argues that Dio's report may be essentially correct; Firpo 1986a considers that Antiochus was a major catalyst in Caligula's inclination to absolutism.
- 53 Suet. *Cal.* 16.3; Tac. *Hist.* 2.81.1.
- 54 Dio 59.24.1; Jones 1971: 211; Braund 1984b: 108. The name may, however, have honoured Claudius or Nero.
- 55 Dio 59.12.2; see Barrett 1977a; Sullivan 1979: 207–11; Dio's date of 38 is borne out by numismatic evidence, which places the beginning of Polemo II's reign in 38/39; see Barrett 1978: 437, n. 3. The ceremony is commemorated in the numismatic record. A bronze Thracian coin, based on a Roman sesterius, depicts the head of Caligula on the obverse and Rhometalces on the reverse, identified by his name and the title *Basileus* (King), receiving his diadem from the emperor (*RPC* 1722); see Abramzon (2000–1). But Dio implies that all three received their kingdoms in this ceremony. That

- might not have been the case: an inscription on an altar base dedicated to Poseidon at Cyzicus (*IGR* 4.147) gives the title of king to Rhoemetaces and Polemo, but not to Cotys; later in 38 Antonia Tryphaena appears to have celebrated the consecration of Drusilla as the New Aphrodite, with games in Cyzicus, in which Polemo and Rhoemetaces (but not Cotys) took part (*IGR* 4.145 cf. 144). This suggests that his confirmation as king might have come later.
- 56 Philo *Leg.* 285; Suet. *Cal.* 38.1; Dio 59.9.5, 60.17.5–7; Woods 2010 suggests that Caligula's strict enforcement of the citizenship laws might be reflected in the abbreviation RCC (something on the lines of *Res Civium Conservatae*) on Caligula's quadrans issue (*RIC*² 1.39, 45, 52; [Figure 14.2](#)).
- 57 Coleman-Norton and Bourne 1961: 112, no. 131; Nagy 1981: 340; Behrends 1996: 140–3.
- 58 Demougin 1988: 545–7; the figures are: Augustus, 23 provincials to 108 Italians; Tiberius, 17 to 51; Caligula, 4 to 10; Claudius, 26 to 31; Africa: Millar 1981: 177.
- 59 Vienne: *ILS* 189, 212 (Smallwood 369); Tac. *Ann.* 11.1.2; Fabia 1929; Sherwin-White 1973: 237–50, 352, n. 1; Malloch 2013: 62–3.
- 60 Suet. *Cal.* 39.2; Willrich 1903: 422; Grant 1949: 99; 1950: 36 notes that there seems to have been a decline in local coinage at the end of the reign throughout the empire.
- 61 *ILS* 1348; Demougin 1988: 724, n. 141; Dietz 1995: 71–2.
- 62 Vell. Pat. 2.39.3; Pflaum 1950: 35; 1974: 11 identifies Caligula's first procurator of Noricum as Aulus Trebonius; *ILS* 4864; Walser 1974: 171–2; Winkler 1977: 203; Kneissl 1979: 266–7 argue that Noricum became a province under Claudius. Gold mining: Piccottini 1994: 467–72; 1999: 68–9; 2001; Gostenčnik 2008: 57.
- 63 For divergent views, see Brunt 1966: 75–91; Alpers 1995; Eck 1996: 179–80; the first instance of the phrase *fiscus Caesaris* is attested in the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*.
- 64 Tac. *Ann.* 4.4.5–6; Suet. *Aug.* 28.1, 101.4, *Cal.* 16.1; Dio 53.20.1, 56.33.1–2, 59.9.4.
- 65 Suet. *Cal.* 37.3; Dio 59.2.6; the figures presumably come from Caligula himself, since Tiberius did not give regular accounts. Philo *Leg.* 9 describes the surplus in general terms as a 'fortune'.
- 66 Suet. *Nero* 30.1. Suetonius says he spent the money in one year, Dio in two.
- 67 Dinner: Sen. *Helv.* 10.4; Fire: *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.30); Suet. *Cal.* 16.3; Dio 59.9.4. For similar action by Tiberius: Tac. *Ann.* 4.64 (AD 27), 6.45.1 (AD 36); Gifts: Dio 59.2.5; ballplayers: Macr. *Sat.* 2.6.5; Demetrius: Sen. *Ben.* 7.11.1–2; see Millar 1992: 136.
- 68 *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31); Suet. *Cal.* 17.2; Dio 59.2.2. Dio's narrative is ambiguous, and it is possible that the *congiaria* were over and above the original award; see Lindsay 1993: 89; Hurley 1993: 66–7; Wardle 1994: 181.
- 69 Suet. *Tib.* 76, *Cal.* 16.3, *Claud.* 6.2, *Galb.* 5.2; Dio 59.2.3. Suet. *Galb.* 5.2 says that Tiberius reduced Galba's bequest from Livia and did not pay out even the reduced amount, but reports that Caligula honoured the bequests *cum fide*.
- 70 Pet. *Sat.* 76.3; see Bagnani 1954: 88–9.
- 71 Augustus: Tac. *Ann.* 1.78.2; Dio 55.25; Tiberius: Tac. *Ann.* 2.42.6; Dio 58.16.2; Caligula: Dio 59.9.6. Suet. *Cal.* 16.3 speaks of his reduction of the *ducentesima* (0.5 per cent). If Suetonius' figure is correct, Tiberius or Caligula would have had to reduce it once before, unnoticed by the sources; see Lindsay 1993: 86; Hurley 1993: 58; Wardle 1994: 173.
- 72 The basic type *RIC*² 1.39 was continued throughout the series. For reservations about the identification: Barrett 1998.
- 73 On completion of their service the pension of certain legionaries was reduced by Caligula from 12,000 sesterces, the figure established by Augustus, to 6,000. This is reported as a punishment for specific units that had been lax, and there is no justification for applying it to the whole Roman army; Suet. *Cal.* 44.1; Dio 55.23.1; see Willrich 1903: 424.

- 74 Gold: Pliny *NH* 33.79; D'Ercé 1969: 123–48 believes that the process involved the making of poison; brothel: Suet. *Cal.* 41.1; Dio 59.28.9–10; Commodus *SHA Comm* 3.7, Elagabalus *SHA Elag.* 24.2, 26.3–5, 30.1; McGinn 1998 does not dismiss the brothel story out of hand, but observes that a single incident might have been expanded in the tradition to a standing practice.
- 75 Aponius may be a Spaniard from Cordoba; see Knapp 1983: 42. He may also be the Aponius wounded in the chaos following Caligula's assassination; despite his apparent lack of energy, he apparently had a successful later career, serving as consul under Claudius or Nero, legate of Moesia and proconsul of Asia (although it is possibly his son who held these offices); see Milns 1973.
- 76 Suet. *Cal.* 38.4 (gladiators), 39.1–2 (Gaul); Dio 59.21.5–6. Suetonius limits the first auction to the possessions of the sisters, Dio adds those of suspected conspirators. Trajan: Pliny *Pan.* 50.1–5; on the confused account of the selling of gladiators, see Ville 1981: 162 n. 50; on the conventional nature of the second auction: Kleijwegt 1996; on the low status of auctioneers: Rauh 1989.
- 77 Suet. *Cal.* 42; Dio 59.28.10. Much has been read into his rolling in his money: Lucas 1967: 185 sees an erotic activity; Gagé 1968: 59 sees it in astronomical terms; Guey 1977 links it with Egyptian associations with divinity. The story can surely stand in its own right.
- 78 Suet. *Cal.* 38.3. Dio 59.15.1 claims that since he had neither wife nor children, he ordered a decree to be passed through the senate to make it easier for him to inherit. The *Lex Julia de Maritandi Ordinibus* imposed restrictions on the ability of the unmarried to inherit, although the widowed were allowed a grace period of three, and later five, years; see Millar 1992: 143–58.
- 79 Suet. *Nero* 6.3. Rogers 1947: 146 attributes Nero's exclusion to the fact that his mother had just been exiled.
- 80 Sen. *Tranq.* 11.10; Ovid *Pont.* 4.5.9–10, 4.15.
- 81 We also know that a slave that belonged to Pylaemenes, son of King Amyntas of Galatia, came into Caligula's possession, but it is unclear whether it was by bequest rather than by confiscation: *CIL* 6.5188.
- 82 Dio 59.10.7, 18.1.
- 83 Augustus: *AJ* 17.355; Dio 53.23.7; Tiberius: Tac. *Ann.* 4.20, 6.2.1, 19.1; see Millar 1992: 161–3.
- 84 Philo *Flacc.* 148–50.
- 85 Dio 59.15.1.
- 86 Gaius *Dig.* 21.56: *quod principi relictum est, qui antequam dies legati cedat ab hominibus ereptus est, ex constitutione divi Antonini successor eius debetur*; see Brunt 1966: 78.
- 87 Suet. *Cal.* 38.2; Dio 59.15.2. Dio says 'any centurion since the Triumph of his father (sc. Germanicus)'; see Gaudemet 1953: 131.
- 88 Jos. *AJ* 19.28; Suet. *Cal.* 40; Dio 59.28.8. Willrich 1903: 425 suggests that the prostitute tax was paid once a month, a view which is influential, but see McGinn 1989: 90 for the daily charge; for a thorough analysis of the tax on litigation: Pölönen 2008.
- 89 *CIL* 13.13750 (time of Commodus); Jos. *AJ* 19.28–29; Suet. *Cal.* 40; Brunt 1990: 390; McGinn 1989: 97–8; 1998: 88–9 argues that the assignment of tax collection to soldiers post-dated Caligula. It remained in the hands of tax collectors in Egypt, and did so in Palmyra until at least 137: *IRG* 3.1056; Matthews 1984.
- 90 On the difficulty of quantifying the financial health of Rome at the time, see the summary at Wardle 1994: 278–80.
- 91 Dio 60.4.1; *CIL* III. 13750 shows soldiers in the Crimea in the reign of Commodus collecting a tax on prostitution; *SHA Sev. Alex.* 24.3: *lenonum vectigal et meretricum et exsoletorum in sacrum aerarium inferri vetuit, sed sumptibus publicis ad instaurationem theatri, Circi, Amphitheatri Stadii deputavit*.
- 92 Suet. *Cal.* 49.1; Momigliano 1932a: 214.

- 93 Jos. *AJ* 19.130, 159, 228; Suet. *Cal.* 14.3, 60; Yavetz 1969: 114–15.
- 94 Dio 59.6.4, 60.25.8. Julius Caesar extended the Saturnalia to three days, where it remained under Augustus (Macr. *Sat.* 1.10.23). Dio says that Caligula created a festival of five days, Suet. *Cal.* 17.2 says that he added one day, perhaps in confusion over the day later abolished. Free seats: Suet. *Cal.* 26.4; Dio 59.13.8; see Ville 1981: 431.
- 95 *Res Gestae* 15.4; he reduced the recipients to a fixed figure of 200,000. Dio 59.6.4 gives the amounts as a drachma (= one Roman denarius), reduced to an obol (= 1/6 of a drachma). If approximate equivalence is intended, this would mean a reduction to a sestertius (1/4 of a denarius). Obol, however, may stand merely for the smallest standard coin, which in Roman terms would be an as. At all events the money raised would have been enormous, and the donation must, as Pekáry 1985: 114 points out, have been intended for the manufacture of *gold* statues; Flambard 1982 argues that the reduction described here is of the *strenae*, New Year gifts (Dio 59.6.4).
- 96 Dio 60.6.6.
- 97 Dio 59.13.3, 28.10; on Nero: Suet. *Nero* 45.2.
- 98 Tac. *Ann.* 6.13.1; Jos. *AJ* 19.24–7; Dio 59.28.11.
- 99 Suet. *Cal.* 16.2; Syme 1958c: 756–9; Levick 1967; Stylow 1971: 288; Holladay 1978; Simpson 1981a; Firpo 1986b: 215, n. 148; Lindsay 1993: 85; Hurley 1993: 57; Wardle 1994: 171–2; Dettenhofer 2003: 188–9.
- 100 Tac. *Ann.* 1.15.1–2; Suet. *Jul.* 41.2, *Aug.* 40.2.
- 101 Suet. *Cal.* 16.3; Dio 59.9.6, 20.3–4; Siber 1939: 171–217; Yavetz 1969: 104.
- 102 Suet. *Cal.* 35.2.
- 103 See Wiseman 1970: 67–83; Saller 1982: 51–2.
- 104 Suet. *Aug.* 38.3–40.1; Ovid *Tr.* 2.89–92, 541–2; on equestrian service in the principate, see Brunt 1983: 42–75.
- 105 Suet. *Cal.* 27.4.
- 106 Suet. *Tib.* 51.2; *Cal.* 26.4, 41.2, 55.1. On *damnatio ad bestias*, see Garnsey 1970: 129–31; Ville 1981: 236, n. 21.
- 107 Suet. *Cal.* 15.1, 53.2; Dio 59.6.1.
- 108 Dio 59.9.5, alluding, presumably, to the additional honorific of the *equus publicus*, unless, in fact, as noted earlier, imperial permission was required even for entry into the order. The reference may even be to enrolment in the decuries; see Millar 1992: 280, n. 10.
- 109 Suet. *Cal.* 16.2; Claudius and Vespasian performed *recognitioes* as censors (Suet. *Claud.* 16.1, *Vesp.* 9.2). Caligula does not seem to have held a census (but see Wiseman 1970: 70, n. 21; he suggests that the possibility should not be ruled out).
- 110 Jos. *AJ* 19.3; Suet. *Cal.* 30.2; Levick 1983: 97–115.
- 111 Dio 59.10.1–4, 60.7.1. Only one knight who fought in the arena is named (by Dio), Atanius Secundus, who had offered to do so in return for Caligula's recovery from illness (Suet. *Cal.* 14.2, 27.2; Dio 59.8.3). Dio 59.10.2 asserts that Caligula sought dispensation from the senate to allow the upper classes to take part in performances. Ville 1981: 233–4 considers the possibility that Caligula instituted *damnatio ad ludum*.
- 112 Suet. *Aug.* 38.2; *Cal.* 16.2; Pliny *NH* 33.33; Dio 59.9.5.
- 113 Suet. *Vesp.* 2.2; Dio's position is supported by Chastagnol 1975: 375–94 and Talbert 1984: 513; it is opposed by Griffin 1984: 50–1 and Saller 1982: 51.
- 114 Dio 59.6.1, 7, 7.8, 24.8 (see Talbert 1984: 188).
- 115 Dio 59.8.6; Suet. *Aug.* 35.4 says that Augustus would sometimes abandon this custom altogether and call on members at random to keep them awake.
- 116 Suet. *Claud.* 9.2; in a similar way Tiberius used to try to delay giving his own opinions before the senators had spoken.
- 117 Suet. *Aug.* 33.3, *Cal.* 16.2; Dio 51.19.6–7, 59.18.2; see Millar 1992: 509–10; Hurley 1993: 55; Wardle 1994: 170.
- 118 Phil. *Leg.* 116.
- 119 Dio 59.13.2; Suet. *Cal.* 26.2.

- 120 See Stewart 1953.
- 121 Malloch 2009: 502 points out that Sejanus would have been the main beneficiary from the connection with Gaetulicus; but that would not have made Gaetulicus any less suspect in Caligula's eyes.
- 122 See Malloch 2013: 322, n. 198.
- 123 Tac. *Ann.* 3.49.2, 6.32.6–7; Suet. *Vit.* 2.5; Pliny *NH* 15.83; Dio 59.27.2–6; Malloch 2013: 71–3.
- 124 *ILS* 972.
- 125 On this theme see Malloch 2009.
- 126 Suet. *Cal.* 35.1; Tac. *Ann.* 15.52.1, 16.9; Hurley 1993: 131–3 suggests Lucius Junius Silanus, brother of Decimus, but there is no evidence that Lucius bore the *cognomen*; see Wardle 1994: 269; Malloch 2009: 496.
- 127 *ILS* 9339.
- 128 Sen. *Apoc.* 11; Suet. *Cal.* 35.1; Dio 60.5.7–9; see McAlindon 1956: 126; Syme 1960; Malloch 2009: 505. Caligula supposedly also thought of killing him, but we must exercise the usual caution over claims of what he intended, rather than actually did.
- 129 Suet. *Cal.* 35.1; Gelzer 1918b: 421–3; Wardle 1994: 269; Malloch 2009: 498 on the more elevated status; on Cincinnatus: *PIR*¹ 3.121.3.
- 130 As argued by Hurley 1993: 132.
- 131 Suet. *Cal.* 34.1.
- 132 Dio 60.25.2. Huet 2008: 200–1 argues that this was a form of *damnatio memoriae*.
- 133 Bauman 1974: 135 suggests that Caligula's measure was in response to Domitius Afer's unfortunate dedicatory inscription (Dio 59.19.1–7) ([Chapter 6](#)); see Wardle 1994: 265.
- 134 Sen. *Cons.* 18.1; Dio 59.13.6, 26.9.
- 135 Philo *Leg.* 344; Tac. *Ann.* 3.65.3.
- 136 Philo *Leg.* 67; Suet. *Cal.* 13.
- 137 Jos. *AJ* 18.255–6, 19.201; Suet. *Cal.* 22.1; Plut. *AJ* 87.4; Dio 59.4.
- 138 Fire: Dio 59.9.4; *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.30); will: Dio 59.1.5; *maiestas*: Dio 59.16.8; condemned: Dio 59.18.2; divorces: Suet. *Cal.* 36.2; brothel: Suet. *Cal.* 41.1.
- 139 Herz 1988: 16.
- 140 Tac. *Ann.* 4.62–3; Suet. *Tib.* 40.
- 141 Sen. *Ira* 3.19.2; Suet. *Cal.* 29, 30.1, 48.1; Dio 59.25.5^b, 30.1c. It is difficult to know how to evaluate a fragment of the *Acts of the Alexandrian Martyrs* (*P. Giss.* 46) that seems to indicate that shortly after his accession Caligula ordered an Egyptian accuser of the Alexandrians to be burned (or branded); see Musurillo and Parássoglou 1954: 105–16; 1961: 6–10, supplemented by Musurillo 1974.
- 142 Tac. *Ann.* 6.48.
- 143 Mommsen 1996: 152.

COINS, INSCRIPTIONS AND SCULPTURE

Coinage

Coinage is invaluable as a historical tool, especially the coins of a ruler like Caligula, for whom the literary sources are often scarce and unreliable. Apart from being a unit of currency, a coin is an excellent vehicle for propaganda in the broadest sense. By the choice of type the issuing authority can ensure that certain images are constantly before the public eye, and remind the user of its achievements or give a visual authority to its policies. The historical significance of some of Caligula's coin issues has already been discussed throughout the text, and what follows is a brief general account of the coinage of his reign for non-numismatists.

Unfortunately, there exists no discussion in any ancient authority about either the theory or practice of Roman coin minting, and our views on the 'policies' of coin production are, by necessity, largely conjectural. It appears that from the third century BC the minting of bronze and precious metal coinage was under the charge of a board of three men (from time to time afterwards increased to four). They would have been responsible for the practical operation of the mint, but not for overall monetary policy, which would have rested with the senate. After 5 BC the names of the moneyers were dropped from the coins and thereafter we have no idea of the size of the board. Nor can we be sure how much freedom of action its members had under the empire. It has been argued that in one sense at least the freedom was considerable, in that imperial coin types were selected not by the emperor but by the moneyers.¹ For practical purposes, of course, it perhaps makes little difference, since the officials would at the very least have been sensitive to what the princeps would have considered appropriate.

In the chaos of the final century of the republic the powerful warlords decentralised the supply of coinage by minting it in their own provinces, and after the death of Caesar the supply of metal for the Roman mint soon ceased. With the division of territory during the triumvirate, the minting of state coinage, often bearing the portraits of individual triumvirs, was similarly divided. The regular operation of the Roman mint could not be revived until some time after the

battle of Actium. Along with this central operation in Rome, however, Augustus maintained the mints that had developed during the civil wars, with locations identified after 27 BC in Spain, Gaul, Greece, Asia and Syria. Tiberius appears to have limited the range of official mints outside Rome to Lyons and Caesarea in Cappadocia (and briefly Commagene). This was the situation at Caligula's accession. It should be added that the precise location of the mint in Rome itself during the Julio-Claudian period is unknown. The first mint was set up originally in the temple of Juno Moneta on the Capitoline and may still have been there in Caligula's time, but certainty is impossible. Inscriptions show that by the reign of Trajan it was located on the Caelian Hill.²

The general view of Augustan coinage, evolving from an original theory of Mommsen, is that Augustus maintained for himself the right to mint gold and silver by virtue either of his *imperium maius*, or his consular authority, while he left bronze coinage to the senate, whose authority was indicated by the letters SC. Although since Mommsen this scheme of things has often been presented as fact, there is actually no explicit evidence for such senatorial authority, and in practice any arrangement would be guided by the will of the emperor. It is by no means certain even that the letters SC need imply senatorial authority. Kraft, for instance, has claimed they indicated not senatorial sanction for the coins but senatorial participation in the honours for Augustus depicted on them; Wallace-Hadrill suggests that the SC was used to distinguish official base metal coins from purely local issues and to give them greater authority and circulation. Sutherland argues that it marked the right of the senate to draw aes coinage from the treasury.³ We simply do not know for sure.

In Caligula's day there co-existed various different monetary systems throughout the empire, and it is not clear how far that empire formed a single circulation area. It must be assumed that regional issues were somehow based on, or at the very least compatible with, official Roman units. In using coins to obtain an insight into the policy and aims of the emperor, we are obliged to rely primarily on the 'official' imperial mints, where coins were struck by the central authority for circulation in a wide area under its overall jurisdiction. Official coinage will to a considerable extent reflect official policy, and is therefore a valid historical tool. That is not true of the hundreds of city mints that operated at a local level where centralised supervision would have been impractical and where there would have been few or any specific directions from Rome.⁴ These local mints are of considerable interest in showing how the emperor was perceived at the regional level, but their distribution areas are so limited and they are physically so far removed from Rome that only in the most remote and indirect way could they be seen as reflecting imperial propaganda. At the least, however, it can be assumed that they would have avoided deliberately producing types that might give offence. But the situation is far from simple. After the Augustan settlement the provinces in the east continued to produce coins modelled on the earlier issues of their regions, some of them of very high quality, for instance tetradrachms in Egypt and Syria, and cistophori in Asia. Some degree of guidance from Rome

would be expected. These major eastern mints survived Caligula for centuries, but he appears to have adopted a highly restrictive policy towards more specifically local mints. In particular, he seems to have closed the wide range of city mints in Spain, causing a shortage of low-value coins that resulted later in a number of local imitations of Claudian issues.⁵ It has been argued that the Spanish mints had become so closely associated with types honouring Caligula's relatives that when the emperor turned against his family in 39 he withdrew the right to mint coins. But it seems unlikely that he would have been so vindictive against such a remote target; in any case, the Spanish mints were not reopened afterwards by Claudius. Willrich on the other hand has suggested a far-sighted policy – that the closure of the local western mints was an attempt to unify the western part of the empire through the use of a single official coinage, an objective that perhaps reflects a modern, more than an ancient, sensibility.⁶ Unfortunately, much of the economic 'policy' of the Roman empire is a closed book to us, and the ending of the local Spanish coinage might have been prompted by financial considerations of which we are totally unaware.

In his official coinage Caligula followed essentially the practice of his predecessors. Augustus' gold and silver issues had been patterned essentially on the coins of the republic; he did, however, make innovations in low-value coinage. Using the model suggested by Julius Caesar, Augustus minted sestertii and dupondii of orichalcum (brass, an alloy of bronze and zinc) and asses and quadrantes of copper, both of these groups conventionally, if somewhat inaccurately, grouped under the term 'aes', the Latin word for 'bronze'.

The following were the official issues from the Rome mint under Caligula.⁷ The weight peaks (i.e. the ranges where the highest concentration of weights occur) are taken from *RIC*²:

aureus (gold)	= 25 denarii; 7.8–7.65 grams
quinarius (gold)	= half-aureus; 3.9–3.8 grams
denarius (silver)	= 4 sestertii; 3.85–3.6 grams
sestertius (orichalcum)	= 2 dupondii; 28.25–27.75 grams
dupondius (orichalcum)	= 2 asses; 16 grams
as (copper)	= 4 quadrantes; 11.75–10.75 grams
quadrans (copper)	3.50–3.10 grams

There are no significant differences in weight from the coins of his predecessor. His precious metal issues are slightly lighter; of his aes issues the sestertii are somewhat heavier, his dupondii more so, while his asses are more or less at the Augustan/Tiberian norm. Die axes are adjusted for aes coinage (the obverse image is oriented to the reverse image) and unadjusted for gold and silver. It is generally observable from dated coins that the minting seems to have been heaviest in the first year of Caligula's reign and, after a virtual hiatus in the second year and

possibly the third, reduced considerably in the fourth. The reason for this pattern eludes us.

The most debated numismatic question of the reign of Caligula is the location of the mint for his gold and silver issues. Strabo, writing in about AD 18, states quite explicitly that imperial gold and silver coins were minted at Lyons, and his assertion receives some support from inscriptions, which indicate the presence of individuals connected with the mint at Lyons in the early principate.⁸ By the Trajanic period the minting of gold and silver at Rome is attested on inscriptions, and the homogeneity of precious metal and aes issues has been traced back to the time of Vespasian. Thus the minting of gold and silver coinage was transferred to Rome at some point between Tiberius and Vespasian; many would narrow the limit for the change to currency reforms introduced by Nero in 64, and certainly Otho could not have had access to the Lyons mint for his precious metal issues. Since Harold Mattingly's time it has been regularly argued that the transfer of the mint to Rome is to be dated to early in Caligula's reign.⁹ Mattingly's thesis rests essentially on a basic feature of Caligula's early coins. Issues dated between March 37 and March 38 have an obverse *bare* head. Some issues in this period, and all issues in later years, have an obverse *laureate* head (wearing a laurel crown), indicating a change in the choice of type during Caligula's first year, one that is accompanied by slight changes in the style of the letter forms. This development is seen as an appropriate point for the change of mint. Sutherland has pointed to other differences in the style of the heads and reinforced Mattingly's theory, although he does concede that changes could be explained by the appointment of new staff from Rome.¹⁰

Recently, however, the weight of scholarly opinion seems to have moved against the notion of a change of mint under Caligula. In particular, Giard has drawn attention to the discovery at Paray-le-Mondial (Saône-et-Loire) in Gaul of two dies for precious metal coins of Caligula, each with laureate head, and has associated one with coins minted as late as 40. He believes that these dies represent the remains of the mint of Lyons and that the equipment was looted and scattered all around the town. Moreover H.B. (to be distinguished from Harold) Mattingly has observed that the dies on Caligula's gold and silver (unlike his aes) remain unadjusted throughout his reign. They start to become adjusted after Nero's currency reform in 64.¹¹

Precious metal types

Caligula's first aurei and denarii have conventional obverses. The reverses are more innovative. In one of the bare head issues, the reverse depicts, with no legend, the radiate head of an emperor, with one star to the left and one to the right of the head (*RIC*² 1.12; [Figure 4.9](#)). It is interesting that some of these specimens bear a head with the features of Tiberius, but it would probably be rash to read too much into the discrepancies in the portraits, given that the engravers would have been in the habit of cutting heads of that emperor. Images on the small precious metal



Figure 15.1 Caligula quinarius (photograph courtesy of Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 51, lot 853, www.arsclassicacoins.com)

coins are often inconsistent, in any case, and Brilliant has observed that even the obverses of Caligula on this issue hardly seem to be of the same person, while the reverse portraits (whether of Augustus or Tiberius) in some instances resemble those on the obverses!¹² A variant of the type depicts the radiate head of Augustus and the legend, *Divus Augustus Pater Patriae* (*RIC*² 1.16; *Figure 4.10*). These types owe their basic inspiration to Tiberian models (*RIC*² 1.23–4), but in their details they are strikingly different.

More original is another series in gold and silver emphasising the importance of family. They bear on the reverses the heads of both Agrippina (*RIC*² 1.7, 8, 13, 14, 21, 22, 30; *Figure 4.4*) and Germanicus (*RIC*² 1.11, 12, 17, 18, 25, 26; *Figure 4.5*), identified in the legends as Caligula's mother and father respectively. These types appear with both the 'bare' and 'laureate' obverses. With the 'laureate' only is a scarce issue beginning in his first year with the standard reverse of SPQR/P(ATER) P(ATRIAE)/OB C(IVES) S(ERVATOS), perhaps in association with his assumption of the title of Pater Patriae (*RIC*² 1.28; *Figure 4.11*). The quinarius issue (*RIC*² 1.5, 20, 29; *Figure 15.1*) continues the conventional reverses of the Augustus and Tiberius quinarii, the seated Victory (*RIC*² 1. Augustus 184–5, 202–3, 213–17; Tiberius 5–22, continued in turn by Claudius 17).

It is noteworthy that with the exception of the gold quinarii, there are no precious issues that can be dated between April 38 and January 40.

Aes types

The general standard of workmanship is much higher on the aes than on the precious metal, mainly because of the larger field that these coins, especially the sestertii, offered. The aes issues mark a major break with the practices of Tiberius.

Dated coins

In Caligula's first year four sestertii types were produced: three obverses have the head of Caligula bare or laureate; the reverses are:

- the three sisters (*RIC*² 1.33, 41; [Figure 4.8](#)). The local mint of Apamea imitates this type with the addition of Diva to Drusilla's name (*RPC* 2012, 2014)
- the *corona civica* (*RIC*² 1.53; [Figure 4.14](#)) with legend SPQR/P(ATER) P(ATRIAE)/ OB CIVES SERVATOS
- *adlocutio cohortis* (lacking SC) (*RIC*² 1.32, 40, 48; [Figure 4.2](#)) This type is strikingly original, the first depiction on coinage of an imperial speech to the army. It quite possibly marks Caligula's donative to the praetorians on his accession. Sutherland suggests that while most of the donative would have consisted of denarii, part of it might have consisted of aes. The coin was reissued in 39–41. Ritter believes that its reissue was connected with the episode of the Bridge at Baiae, at which praetorians were present¹³
- the fourth sestertius issue has the obverse of a seated Pietas, with the dedication of the Temple of Augustus on the reverse (*RIC*² 1.36, 44, 51; [Figure 4.12](#)).

One dated dupondius shows Nero and Drusus as riders on the obverse, and Caligula's legend around SC as the reverse (*RIC*² 1.34, 42, 49; [Figure 4.3](#)). The obverse is imitated by Herod Agrippa (Meshorer no. 1), although depicting only a single figure, with similar flowing cloak and raised arm, identified as Agrippa's son.¹⁴

There are two dated asses:

- obverse of Caligula's head and reverse of Vesta (*RIC*² 1.38; [Figure 3.2](#))
- obverse of Germanicus' head and reverse identical to the obverse of the dated dupondius (*RIC*² 1.35; [Figure 4.6](#)).

There is one dated quadrans. Beginning in the latter part of 39 Caligula's quadrans issue appears, with the obverse of a *pileus* (cap of liberty) between SC, and a reverse of Caligula's legend around RCC (*RIC*² 1.39, 45, 52; [Figure 14.2](#)). This is perhaps the most puzzling of his issues. In 1796 Eckhel claimed that the letters stood for *rei censitae conservator* (based on an obscure inscription no longer extant), but they are now generally taken to stand for *remissa ducentesima*, a reference to a removal of the 0.5 per cent sales tax.¹⁵ There are some serious objections to this idea. In the first place the literary evidence strongly favours the notion that the sales tax when removed by Caligula stood at 1 per cent, not 0.5 per cent. Also Dio places the removal of the tax in 38, while the coins do not appear until late enough in 39 for Caligula to be designate consul for the following year.¹⁶ Eckhel also argued that the cap of liberty was meant to refer to the restoration of the elections to the

comitia. But this is open to the same objections, since the elections were restored to the people in 38, a year before the coin was issued. Stylow has claimed that the cap has nothing to do with the elections but, like the reverse, echoes the theme of the tax reduction, as a stage in the development of the concept of *libertas* in the form of the concern and provision for his people by the emperor.¹⁷ In fact, there is no way of knowing whether the issue has anything at all to do with the sales tax or what the letters RCC might stand for (the combination is otherwise unknown). The types on quadrantes tend to have a commercial theme – their small field makes them generally unsuitable for grandiose propaganda purposes. But Caligula was innovative in his use of coin types. The curious coincidence of the cap of liberty and the issue date of late 39 (when events were dominated by the conspiracy of Lepidus) at least raises the possibility that they have some association with the suppression of the conspiracy.¹⁸

All of these denominations continue to appear after Caligula's first year, with the exception of the 'three sisters' type, which was suspended after the disgrace of Caligula's two surviving sisters. As with the precious issues, there is a gap in the dated aes issues after April 38, until April 39 at the earliest. With the exception of the quadrantes they do not show consular years and it is not possible to tell if the gap in the main aes series parallels that of the precious issues, continuing up to January 40. The quadrantes, at any rate, reappear in late 39.

Undated coins

The obverse of an undated sestertius carries the bust and legend of Agrippina, while the reverse depicts a *carpentum* ('carriage') (*RIC*² 1.55; Figure 4.7). Caligula decreed games in the circus in honour of his mother, with a *carpentum* to carry her image.¹⁹ This issue has tended to be dated to the opening of Caligula's reign, but Trillmich has argued on stylistic and numismatic grounds that it is spread throughout the reign, and makes a common group with the undated Divus Augustus dupondius and the Agrippa asses (both follow), all emphasising Caligula's blood relationship with Augustus.

An undated dupondius shows an obverse radiate head and legend of the Divine Augustus (*RIC*² 1.56; Figure 15.2) and on the reverse an enthroned figure holding an orb in the left hand and a branch in the other and the legend *CONSENSU SENAT ET EQ ORDIN PQR* ('with the consent of the senate and equestrian order and Roman People'). The attribution of this coin to Caligula is by no means certain. This seated figure is generally identified as Augustus; Kaenel argues that it represents Caligula, on (dubious) iconographical grounds and because the theme suits Caligula's accession. But the *consensus* motif is essentially Augustan, used at Caligula's accession in a deliberate attempt to associate himself with his earlier predecessor. Recently, Levy has detected traces of a radiate crown on the head of the seated figure, hardly appropriate of Caligula in a coin that stresses his constitutionality. The Augustan identification seems most likely.²⁰



Figure 15.2 Caligula dupondius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

Another undated dupondius has an obverse of Germanicus standing in a quadriga holding a sceptre, with an advancing figure of victory on the chariot, and a reverse of a standing Germanicus and the legends *SIGNIS RECEP(T)IS* and *DEVICTIS GERM(ANIS)* (*RIC*² 1.57; *Figure 15.3*). It was imitated in bronze issues of Herod Agrippa.²¹ The dupondius is generally assumed to be Caligulan, although some ascribe it to Tiberius.²²

The commonest of the issues of Caligula is the so-called Agrippa as (*RIC*² 1.58; *Figure 14.1*). It depicts on its obverse a bust of Agrippa, facing left, with rostral crown and the legend *M. AGRIPPA L F COS III*. On the reverse is a Neptune holding a dolphin in his right hand and trident in his left, and the



Figure 15.3 Caligula dupondius (photograph courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. www.cngcoins.com)

letters *SC*. It is found most commonly near the Rhine frontier. Scholars have generally accepted that this coin was minted under Caligula, but it has been argued by some that it appeared first under Tiberius. Opinion has differed over whether it was produced at a number of different mints, in the provinces as well as in Rome.²³ Nicols, however, has pointed out that the adjusted die axis of these asses, with ‘upside-down’ reverse, is not compatible with that of Tiberian coins. In the mid-Tiberian reign the adjusted axis with upright reverse is always found on at least some of his aes. By the end of his reign it predominates. There are no Agrippa asses found with this arrangement, which is foreign also to known Caligulan issues. Nicols argues that Caligula issued this coin in conjunction with other family types, to be continued under Claudius although in reduced numbers. She suggests that the coins originate in the issues of the colony of Nîmes (Nemausus), bearing the portraits of Agrippa and Augustus, back to back, which were often neatly halved to keep the heads intact. The Agrippa represents the continuity of this tradition.²⁴ Szaivert suggests that the minting of the coin continued under Claudius to make up for the shortage created when aes issues with Caligula’s head were prohibited (see [Chapter 13](#)).²⁵ The Agrippa as was imitated in issues of Caesaraugusta, the richest of the local mints of Spain. As shown by the names of the moneyers the colony produced three coin issues, dated by Trillmich to the first three years of Caligula’s reign. The Agrippa imitations appear in the second and third issues.²⁶

Official coins of Caesarea

One of the foremost of the eastern mints was at Caesarea in Cappadocia. Latin-inscribed silver coins can be compared in style and fabric to Greek-inscribed issues apparently intended for local use (with the type of Mount Argaeus) and this confirms the mint-location of the Latin coins. Coins were produced here by all the emperors from Tiberius to Nero, the mint activity being closely connected with the degree of Roman military activity in the east. It might not have been felt wise to entrust the minting of large amounts of silver coinage to the already powerful governor of Syria.

There are three Caserean issues:

- A didrachm (*RIC*² 1.59; [Figure 1.2](#)) has an obverse head of Germanicus and on the reverse an image of Germanicus on the right holding a spear in his left and placing a tiara on the head of Zeno Artaxias on the left, both identified by the legends Artaxias and Germanicus, possibly to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the event. We cannot be certain that this coin was not minted in AD 18, at the time of the event, but it seems unlikely that it would have promoted Germanicus to such a degree during his lifetime without the head of the reigning emperor.
- A drachm (*RIC*² 1.63; [Figure 4.1](#)), probably from Caligula’s first year, as suggested by the legend TRPOT without further enumeration, carries an

obverse bare head of Caligula, and, on the reverse, priestly implements of the pontifex maximus.

- A drachm (*RIC*² 1.60–62; [Figure 4.11](#)) carries an obverse bare head of Germanicus, with legend IM presumably standing for IMP, not pontifex maximus, but note that the letters are separated by dots. On the reverse is a radiate head of Augustus

Inscriptions

The historical importance of inscriptions varies greatly from period to period. In practice, their use for the reign of Caligula is somewhat limited. Since, unlike coins, they were not issued in enormous multiples their survival rate is naturally much lower, and in absolute terms relatively few are known for his reign. Also, most inscriptions are of provincial origin, where honorifics and titles do not always conform to the official imperial practice, and where dates may be confused or mistaken. There are two important exceptions. The *Fasti*, known from at least the fourth century BC, were technically calendars, but are closer to what we would now call ‘almanacs’. They marked the *dies fasti* and *nefasti* for the conduct of business, and eventually embraced a wide range of information, recording magistrates, festivals, triumphs and important state events. For the reign of Caligula the *Fasti* of Ostia, though surviving only for 37/8 within our period, provide an invaluable sequence of events. They reveal the delay between the arrival of Tiberius’ body into the city and his funeral (showing that it was not hasty), the dates of Caligula’s *congria*, of Antonia’s and Drusilla’s death, and of the fire in the Aemiliana.

Probably the most important epigraphic material for our specific purposes are the surviving inscriptions of the Arval brotherhood.²⁷ Information on this priestly college must be extrapolated from its own record, since there are scant literary references. Its cult centre lay some four miles to the west of Rome on the Via Campana, outside the city limits, at the shrine of the goddess Dea Dia, although rites took place also within the city. It was made up of twelve men in addition to the emperor. At their head stood the magister, selected from the brotherhood on an annual rotating basis. Although its roots probably go back to the early days of the republic, the Arval brotherhood began to flourish with the establishment of the principate. Most importantly for the historian, the college started then to keep a record of its rituals inscribed on stone, which has survived from 21 BC to AD 304. One of the most noticeable features of these inscriptions is the prominence of the imperial family, marked by the annual vows and sacrifices performed for the emperor and, where appropriate, his relatives. Also there are rites carried out on birthdays and on the anniversaries of important events in the imperial family calendar. For Caligula’s reign the Arval record is useful at the most basic level for showing times when Caligula and other prominent individuals were in the vicinity of Rome, as well as providing information on such items as the date of his acclamation as emperor. The most important epigraphic development for the reign of Caligula in recent years was the discovery of a large fragment of the

record for 38, enabling us, among other things, to date the assumption of the title of Pater Patriae firmly to September 37 (it was usually assigned to the spring of 38).

Inscriptions must be evaluated judiciously, since a contemporary record is not necessarily an accurate one. In particular the *Tabulae Cereatae*, wax tablets (the wax has disappeared but impressions are left on the wooden tablets), found especially in Pompeii, whose information tends often to be of a private and ephemeral nature, are to be treated with caution. One example, dated to January 5, AD 41, showing Caligula no longer consul is highly suspect, since Suetonius, who tends to be fairly reliable on such details, claims that he did not hand down the office until January 7. Another, dated to June 8, AD 37, has Caligula and Claudius consuls by that time, even though the *Fasti* and the literary sources indicate that they did not enter the consulship until July 1. The most curious example of all is dated to April of an unspecified year, showing Caligula consul with Marcus Cocceius Nerva, which contradicts all the epigraphic and literary evidence. In no year was Caligula consul in April, and he was never the colleague of Nerva.²⁸

Sculpture

When a deputation representing the league of several Greek states arrived in Rome on Caligula's accession to offer him various honours, he recommended that they save themselves much expense by limiting the number of statues erected to him, and by restricting the locations to the sites of the great games: Olympia, Nemea, Delphi and the Isthmus (of Corinth). Dio goes so far as to suggest that he forbade the manufacture of statues of himself, presumably a specific injunction applied to a specific request, and misunderstood by Dio as representing general policy. In fact, for a reign as short as his, statues seem to have been produced in considerable quantity, to judge from the literary evidence and the bases found throughout the empire.²⁹ Rose has also pointed out that with the accession of Caligula we see a resurgence in family statue groups, a feature that had been dormant since the death of Drusus, son of Tiberius, in AD 23.³⁰ In Rome, statues of Caligula and Claudius were set on the Capitoline to mark their entry into the consulship in 37. In Alexandria in 38 the Greeks supposedly provoked the Jews by setting up a statue of Caligula in a refurbished triumphal chariot that had once housed Cleopatra but had fallen into rusty decay. In 39, Domitius Afer dedicated a statue to the emperor in Rome. Probably in the same year Caligula's golden image was set up in the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, and he may similarly have placed his statue in the Temple of Castor and Pollux. In Rome his images seem to have been the targets of malicious vandalism during his lifetime, and the senate arranged for an armed guard to watch over them. Ultimately this was to be no protection. Some of his statues seem to have been toppled during the confusion that followed the assassination, and, although there was no formal *damnatio memoriae*, Claudius discreetly arranged for the remaining ones to be removed.³¹ Because of this, and because of normal attrition, it is likely that only a fraction of the numerous likenesses of Caligula that were created have survived.

None of the surviving sculpted heads that have been attributed to Caligula have been found in association with their inscribed bases, and the identifications are founded, essentially, on the resemblances to coin portraits. It is clearly a far from exact process, and while it may be possible to assign a sculpted head to its general historical period with some certainty, it is rarely possible to assign it with any degree of confidence to a particular individual. In the final analysis such identifications will be largely subjective. We must assume that any portrait of Caligula, indeed of any member of the imperial family, has its origin in a prototype created by a master sculptor in the presence of the subject, and then sent out in copies, presumably terracotta or plaster. We have no actual physical evidence for this, but there is literary and epigraphic evidence for the distribution of images in the later empire.³² Of course this process did not produce a body of exact replicas. Local conditions and tastes, as well as the idiosyncrasies of the individual sculptor, would result in a whole range of variations designed to confuse and challenge the modern scholar.

The distinctive features of Caligula on his official coinage enabled Boschung, in the major catalogue of sculpted depictions of Caligula, to identify forty-eight pieces (for a rough comparison, over 250 portraits of Augustus have been identified). In the attributed pieces we can often observe the deeply set eyes. The forehead is long and almost vertical. The nose is slightly bulbous. The mouth is small, and the lower lip tends to retract. There is only a hint of baldness in the high hairline in some of the examples, and we also see attempts to comb the



Figure 15.4 Head of Caligula, Getty Museum, Malibu

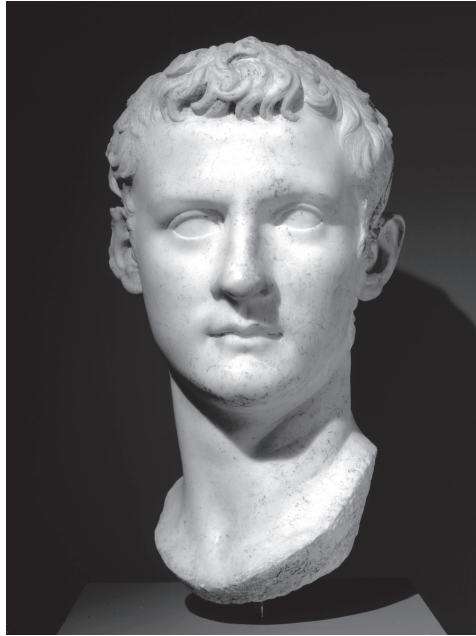


Figure 15.5 Head of Caligula, Worcester Art Museum (MA) (Museum Purchase, 1914.23)

hair forward at the temples, perhaps to conceal a receding hairline. Boschung identified one official main portrait type (Haupttypus) of Caligula, from which he felt that vast majority of the surviving portraits originate.³³ It is characterised by the treatment of the locks over the forehead, namely a main parting of the hair above the centre, or over the inside angle of the left eye. He argued that this type was created to mark Caligula's accession in AD 37. This main type is well represented in the statue in Richmond, which we now know originated from the imperial shrine at Bovillae (Figure 3.1), and also by the famous head from Schloss Fasanerie near Fulda (Figure 3.3). In the latter profile image one can see the characteristic small mouth with the retracted lower lip that is manifested also on coins. Other examples are known in Malibu (Figure 15.4) and Worcester (Figure 15.5). The second, much smaller group (Nebentypus), found only on sites in Italy, manifests a fringe of comma-shaped locks mostly combed over from left to right over the middle of the forehead, and forking by the far left side of the forehead. This latter arrangement of the hair is seen in the fine heads preserved in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek (Figure 13.1) and in the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven (Figure 15.6). Boschung speculated that this secondary group might have been created to mark the acceptance of the title *Pater Patriae* in September of 37. Pollini suggests after his recovery from illness.³⁴ Ancient sculpture was regularly painted and while most of the material has disappeared, traces are to be found on the toga of the Richmond statue (Figure 3.1), and on the face of the bare head in Copenhagen (Figure 13.1).³⁵

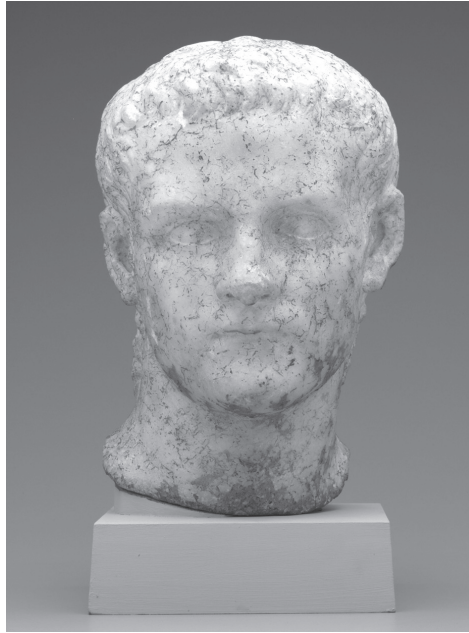


Figure 15.6 Head of Caligula, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

In this broad category we might also add the depictions found in smaller media, on gemstones, cameos and the like. Given the length of Caligula's reign a relatively high number of these small items, which would have been in private possession, bear his image, perhaps a reflection of his enormous popularity at the outset of the reign. It will be recalled that the consul Sentius Saturninus had the likeness of Caligula engraved on his ring.³⁶

Artistic depictions of ancient rulers can sometimes be attributed with confidence but they can only very rarely be attributed with certainty, and iconography remains in essence a subjective process. For this reason, one must be cautious about using sculpted heads for historical evidence. In particular, one must beware of circular arguments. The famous head in Copenhagen is generally accepted as a likeness of Caligula, and the attribution is strengthened by the presence of an oak crown and breastplate, accoutrements, according to the literary sources, of Caligula when he rode over the bridge at Baiae. But we cannot go on and use those accoutrements on the statue to validate those same sources.

Notes

- 1 Levick 1982: 104–16; for a discussion see Jones 1956; Crawford 1983; Sutherland 1986.
- 2 Livy 6.20.13; Carson 1956; Sutherland 1976: 62.
- 3 Mommsen 1887–8: 2.1026–8; Kraft 1962; Bay 1972; Sutherland 1976: 5–21, 1987: 35–8; Wallace-Hadrill 1986; Wolters 1999: 84–5; for a good basic summary of the problem, see Talbert 1984: 379–83.

- 4 On the distinction see Grant 1956; but see Trillmich 1973, who argues that the types of local issues were determined at Rome as part of a coherent programme of official propaganda.
- 5 Grant 1946: 443–6; 1949; Campo 1974. No tetradrachms were minted for Caligula in Alexandria; Vogt 1924: 22–3 identified certain bronze coins of Alexandria as Caligulan; they were later rejected by Milne 1933, who argued that the mint of Alexandria was also closed down, but recent scholarly opinion has identified some of them as Caligulan, with varying degrees of confidence: *RPC* 5106–12; see the discussion at Savio 1988: 8–19, *RPC* 698–9.
- 6 Willrich 1903: 422–3.
- 7 For a useful survey of Caligula's coinage, see Szaivert 1984: 41–50.
- 8 Strabo 4.3.2; *CIL* xiii, 1820, 1499. Sutherland 1976: 46–8 reviews the evidence.
- 9 Mattingly, *BMC* cxlii–iii.
- 10 Sutherland 1976: 64; 1981: 297–9; *RIC*² 103 n. 1.
- 11 Giard 1976. There is a danger that these were forgers' dies. See also Burnett 1977: 62; Trillmich 1978: 80–6; Mattingly 1985: 256; Kaenel 1978: 42–3; Savio 1988: 73.
- 12 Brilliant 1969. It has been argued that the resemblance to Tiberius is not accidental. Mattingly 1920: 37–8 suggests that the head of Tiberius was accompanied by two stars to suggest his divinity at the outset, but that when the plans for apotheosis fell through, the Tiberius head was dropped for that of Augustus. The two stars, he suggests, represent Augustus and Tiberius. But the plan for Tiberius' apotheosis was abandoned at the very beginning of his reign; see Belloni 1974; Sutherland 1987: 65–8.
- 13 Ritter 1971; Sutherland 1987: 70; cf. Robertson 1968: 63.
- 14 For the identification of a gilded bronze equestrian group as Nero and Drusus, see Nicosia 1987.
- 15 Eckhel 1796: 6.224.
- 16 There is, unfortunately, no consistency in the dates by which the *designatio* was determined, but Elmer 1934: 24 argues that on the basis of frequency the 39 quadrans issue must have appeared late in the year.
- 17 Stylow 1971.
- 18 See Barrett 1998 for a possible connection with the conspiracy of AD 39; Woods 2010 connects it with Caligula's enforcement of the citizenship laws.
- 19 Suet. *Cal.* 15.1.
- 20 Kaenel 1978; Levy 1988: 101–7; Küthmann 1959–60 claims that the seated figure is Claudius.
- 21 Meshorer 1982: II. 53.
- 22 *RIC*² 1.107; Christ 1957: 516, n. 79; Mannsperger 1974: 948, n. 74 assigns *RIC*² 1.57 (Caligula) to Tiberius (see also Trillmich 1978: 48, n. 106); Küthmann 1953–4 and Kaenel 1972: 86, nr. 536 believe it was issued by Claudius.
- 23 See Küthmann 19544: 73 (Tiberius); Chantraine 1969 (Caligula); Kraay 1962: 35 (Tiberius to Nero); Jameson 1966: 95–124 (Tiberius to Claudius); Metcalf 1990 (Caligula, on the basis of X-ray fluorescence analysis).
- 24 Nicols 1974. Aes for a donative seems unlikely, but see *RIC*² 1.32, 40, 48 and Crawford 1970: 45, 47–8.
- 25 Dio 60.22.3; Szaivert 1984: 50.
- 26 Vives 1926: 4.84, nos 66–77; Trillmich 1973: 151–73; Küthmann 1953–4: n. 22 dates all the moneyers to Caligula's first year.
- 27 For recent studies of the Arval brotherhood, see Beard 1985; Behr 1996; Scheid 2009.
- 28 AD 37: *AE* 1969/70.100; *Fasti Ostienses* (Smallwood 31.15); Suet. *Cal.* 17.1; Dio 59.6.5; AD 41: *AE* 1978.137; Suet. *Cal.* 17.1; Nerva: *AE* 1982.200.
- 29 A partial list of Caligulan statue bases appears in Stuart 1939.
- 30 Rose 1997: 36.

- 31 Phil. *Leg.* 134–6; Suet. *Cal.* 22.3; Dio 59.4.4, 19.2, 26.3, 28.3, 30.1a, 60.4.5; *ILS* 8972 (Smallwood 361).
- 32 Ando 2000: 228–32.
- 33 Boschung 1989; Hoff 2009 claims that depictions of Caligula show continuity with Augustus and Tiberius but also the features of the absolute ruler. Pollini 1982 offers an excellent description of the criteria for identifying a Caligulan portrait, and Pollini 2013 provides a very useful and authoritative online survey of Caligula’s sculpture.
- 34 Boschung 1989: 102; Pollini 2013.
- 35 Reports on analysis of the pigment of the Ny Carlsberg head are available at Sargent and Therkildsen 2010; Brinkmann 2010; see also Pollini 2012: 397–9.
- 36 Jos. *AJ* 19.166–87.

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